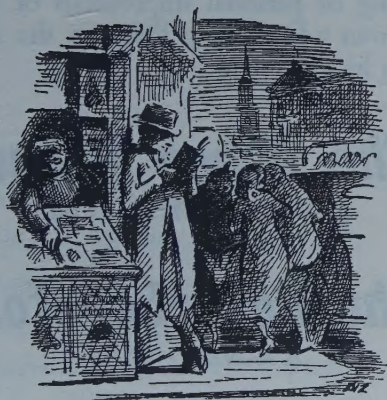


THE LONDON MAGAZINE



EDITED BY

John Lehmann

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HENRY JAMES

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RUPERT HART-DAVIS

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HEINRICH HEINE

E. M. Butler

To mark the centenary of Heine's death we publish this new full-length biography by an Emeritus Professor of German at Cambridge.

Book Society Recommendation

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RAYMOND AND I

Elizabeth Robins

'The whole episode is extraordinary, the descriptive details are vivid; and we are made to feel the intensity of the relation between brother and sister.'

Raymond Mortimer

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MEN AND GARDENS

Nan Fairbrother

'The book which has really delighted and interested me.'

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THE HOGARTH PRESS

Foreword

The chances that may raise an author to sudden world-wide fame have become, one cannot help feeling, more extraordinary and more irrelevant in our time than ever before. George Orwell was always an interesting writer, with a small but admiring public mainly among the politically-minded intellectuals of the thirties; if *Animal Farm* had been published when it was written, in 1944, his fame might well have remained confined to those circles. As it was, it appeared at the time of Nazi Germany's defeat, when disillusionment about Russia and the hero-figure of Stalin was rapidly spreading in the West. The immediate result was that it became a best-seller, and Orwell one of the most talked-of authors of the day in almost every country of the world. Thousands of people who would only have yawned if offered *Homage to Catalonia* at the time when its message was most urgent, began to explore and find unexpected pleasure in his earlier books. Another result has been the demand for books about him: without the success of *Animal Farm* it is all but inconceivable that there should have appeared, within so few years of his death, the advance-guard of what will evidently be a whole army of critical and biographical studies.

The latest, by Christopher Hollis¹, is especially interesting because Mr Hollis was at school with him, met him again (by chance) in Burma, and became closer friends with him at the end of his life. I do not myself find that the objections that have been raised against this book, on the grounds of its Catholic bias, are very important. Protestants and agnostics will see without difficulty where Mr Hollis is over-stating his case, where the evidence simply does not warrant the deductions made. What matters is that a remarkably convincing picture of Orwell as a man of feeling and opinion comes through. The paradoxes are all there: the obsessive assertion that his ego had sustained lasting hurt because he had been sent to school (at Eton) with boys from better-off families than his own, when in fact he had fitted with ease into the mixed and tolerant world of College; the reasoned defence of the British colonial administrator's attitude from the man who was later to denounce it; the international revolutionary who found that in a crisis his love for his country came before any other allegiance. In his essay published in *Folios of New Writing* in 1940, *My Country Right or Left* (which

¹ *A Study of George Orwell* by Christopher Hollis. (Hollis and Carter. 18s.)

Fabulous Originals

IRVING WALLACE

A combination of literary detection and biography, this book recaptures the extraordinary lives of some of the world's greatest eccentrics—poets and men of sciences, rogues, mistresses and adventurers—all of them models for characters famous in literature. Here are the prototypes for Robinson Crusoe, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Sherlock Holmes, Juliana Bordereau in Henry James's *The Aspern Papers*, and many others. In each case Mr. Wallace reveals how the novelist came upon the prototype and how he made use of it, then he gives an account of the original's amazing career.

21s. net.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Elizabethan Quintet

G. DENIS MEADOWS

Four men and one woman are the subjects of these biographical sketches. They have in common the unbounded energy and optimism of the period, but otherwise they are singularly diverse personalities. There is Sir Francis Walsingham and his opponent in the war of ideals, Robert Persons—one of the most controversial figures in history. There is Sir John Harrington, and Dr. Lee, the Queen's astrologer. And, finally, there is Mary Frith, delinquent gangster, who gives the lie to the maxim that crime does not pay.

15s. net.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Golden Ring

GIULIANA ARTOM-TREVES

An informal study of those British and American Citizens who settled in Florence about a hundred years ago. There were many famous names in this community of exiles, among them Robert and Elizabeth Browning, Walter Savage Landor and the Trollops, and also many lesser known but equally fascinating characters. Extensive research and skilful use of contemporary sources have enabled the author to create a vivid picture of the Anglo-Florentines. The translation is by Sylvia Sprigge.

Illustrated. 21s. net.

LONGMANS

FOREWORD

Mr Hollis does not mention), Orwell describes how he had a dream the night before the Russo-German pact was announced in 1939, which proved to him that if it came to war he would without hesitation support his own side. That support never wavered, as it did with some of his fellow revolutionaries of the 'thirties, according to whether we were allied with the Soviets or not. In a letter to me in July 1940 he wrote: 'What is so terrible about this kind of situation is to be able to do nothing. The Gov't. won't use me in any capacity, not even as a clerk, and I have failed to get into the army because of my lungs. It is a terrible thing to feel oneself useless and at the same time on every side to see half wits and pro-fascists filling important jobs.' If Orwell, during these years, turned violently against a whole body of his fellow-socialists and radicals ('the boiled rabbits of the left' as he called them), it was chiefly because of his hatred of cant, and of theoretical opinions divorced from natural human feeling. To find out the real human predicament, behind the cant of the moment: one might describe that as the mainspring of Orwell's genius. As Mr Hollis implies, Orwell was not really a very good novelist, judged from the pure standards of novel-writing: if that were his whole claim to immortality, it would be easily dismissed. What he had first of all was a brilliant capacity for imagining situations produced by following certain assumptions to their limit; and these assumptions were part of the dangerous intellectual climate of his life. He may have been absurdly prone to exaggeration; he may have had a curiously masochistic side to his nature (certainly not explained by his experiences at Eton) which led him to expect the worst, to want to think that everything was going downhill; but these two characteristics were if anything an advantage in the particular task he set himself of warning his generation of the menace concealed in some of their illusions.

No one, I believe, surveying the contemporary intellectual scene dispassionately, can fail to see how badly we are in need of someone who could put an equally powerful charge of gunpowder under shallow pretensions and humbug. 'Orwell, thou shouldst be living at this hour!' But if Orwell was the most vigorous pamphleteer of his time and something more than a brilliant journalist, it was because he saw so clearly the connection between language and civilization. Who is there now to proclaim, with Orwell's dialectical force, the importance of the right respect for words, that good writers are good because they understand how to use words, that the way to reinvigorate literature as well as political thinking is 'by starting at the verbal end'?

JOHN LEHMANN

Modern French Stories

edited by JOHN LEHMANN

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★ V. S. PRITCHETT: "A most varied and refreshing collection . . . the tradition of Merimée and Maupassant is very much alive."

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★ CYRIL CONNOLLY *The Sunday Times*: "We need a first-rate anthology of American poetry in this country, and no one is better fitted than Professor Auden to compile it. . . . It has given me great delight." 21/-

Poetry Now

edited by G. S. FRASER

A lively anthology representing the work of the younger poets of today. (Ready mid-October) 15/-

Selected Poems LAWRENCE DURRELL

This attractive selection, chosen by the poet himself, includes several poems not previously published in book form. (Mid-October) 10/6

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ANNE RIDLER

A distinguished verse play which was given its *première* on the B.B.C. Third Programme on March 21st and later performed in St Mary's, Oxford. 12/6

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The Noon's Repose



One day I left the slings and arrows of rain, the whips of wind and the fickle sun of London, and the day after stood in the steady golden light of Aix-en-Provence. I had felt hurried and troubled; now time went slowly and everything was clear. I could hear the water falling in the fountains, and the crickets in the trees; I could see the yellow grey palaces with their balconies and doorways and touch their hot walls; I could smell the Provençal kitchens and then, sitting down, taste the familiar apéritif.

The swell of great names of the streets and palaces encircled me: Panisse-Passis, Espariat, Eguilles, Alphéran, Albertas—I was in the Cours Mirabeau in the shade now; it was the hour before the mid-day meal; very old people sat on the seats under the plane trees near the fountains, others in the cafés: amongst these I suddenly saw Theodora. I call her Theodora because she reminds me of the Empress in Ravenna, because of her golden necklaces and ear-rings, slim sandals and something purple in her dress, and because she is known to everyone, even to the tradesmen, only by her first name. Theodora was accompanied by three men, visiting or living in Aix; she came up to welcome me and invited us to lunch at her house outside the town. First we rushed in a jeep along the country road, then bumped up a hill, and all the time the music of Provence sounded in my ears—Peyrolles, Meyrargues, Loumarin, Lou Garagai, Durance. . . .

Theodora, though she is an Empress, lives in a peasant's house stuck on the side of a hill. A rough narrow terrace in front of the house takes the place of a garden; under some sparse trees we saw a table and chairs and, further away, an old Roman circular stone with a Latin inscription on it had been made into a permanent table near some olive trees. Workmen were building a wing to the house, and, bare to the waist, stood on ladders or walked up and down the terrace fetching what they needed. Dishes were brought out and a

girl wearing a red blouse and white shorts, Theodora's daughter Lil, put fruit and wine on the table. Here in the sun we ate, drank and talked. Theodora's guests were a philosopher, a boy with curly hair known as Jojo and the French writer Charles. He is middle-aged, loves to ride a bicycle, writes only now and then, but those who read or listen to him do not want to miss one of his thoughts or one of his phrases.

We talked about fairy-tales. The philosopher described their origin in Pagan myths and how their descent could be traced. Charles said:

'Yes, the same desires and fears echo—echo—through the stories, difficulties arise, yet Ariadne's thread seems to lead the way between good and evil, will and hazard.'

'Truth and Beauty,' said the philosopher, 'are the flowers of original solutions'—

'Yes, our mission here seems to be to solve and to transform,' replied Charles; 'between darkness and light, between the delicate and the terrible, between oneself and others, each one has to find his one and only way and leave his one and only mark—not by rules—but by instance—by balance.'—

'By disguise! By surprise!' cried Jojo.

'But how,' asked the philosopher frowning, 'can he choose rightly?'

'By the power of first-rate senses and a desire for truth, of course—then—leave him alone.' Charles seemed to murmur to himself, 'give up education, develop these, and it will be enough. The sum of all truths—what might it not mean?'

Lil broke in—'The best story of all was always *Beauty and the Beast*'—

'You see,' said Charles, 'where the negative becomes the positive'—

'Then *The Snow Queen*: one might call her "la belle dame sans merci"—and the *Black Bull of Norway* where endurance redeems—you remember?'

'Seven lang years I served for thee,
The glassy hill I clamb for thee,
The bluidy shirt I wrang for thee,
And wilt thou not waken and turn to me?'

'The power to believe against all hope,' said the philosopher. 'I was thinking of the story of Abraham and Isaac as interpreted by Kierkegaard.'

'The power to love against common sense,' said Charles.

'Uncommon sense is what's needed! not common sense!' laughed

Jojo, 'uncommon sense!'

'O, I am tired of myths and fairy-tales,' sighed Theodora, 'give me real life! Think of the deserters from the army who live in the hills like wild animals—marauding—stealing—carrying off the chickens from the farms'—

'And perhaps the girls and boys!' cried Jojo, and Theodora asked, 'Doesn't anyone know a true story?'

The sun was blazing and we were silent. Charles moved to the bank under the olive trees, carrying his glass and singing in a low voice a poem of the country to a cup of wine. We followed, putting bottles and glasses under the stone table, and lay on the ground, now looking up at the silver leaves, now down at the dry grasses.

'Couldn't you sing a song to sleep?' asked Theodora.

Jojo was sucking a peach, and looking up as a young workman passed carrying a bucket of water he cried out—'Eh! let me put my hands in it!' The young man splashed the water over his hands and legs and went back for more. 'What a face,' laughed Jojo. 'But *he* has a curious story and you know it, Charles—tell it.'

Charles, filling his glass, told it.

'You must own—a handsome face,' he began, 'but with a snarl on it, or is it perhaps just a shadow? There was a time—not long ago—when the shadow was much darker. Then he was a surly, silent youth, rude and bitter if he did speak, even violent. No one knew why. He went about either alone or with a group of young men, spending his time gambling or poaching—snaring birds and animals. He loved anything that had a risk in it or a twist of cruelty. I remember being told that when he was a little boy he was running along a path towards his mother, who held out her arms to him, but half way he stopped, turned and ran in the opposite direction. He never had a friend and seemed suspicious of all women. Many girls fell for him, and a slight, shy one, almost a child, one might say, in particular, who lived in the same district as he did, on the edge of the town, where she would see him gambling furiously with other boys, throwing pebbles, opening a clenched fist, or see him in the side street where her house was and also a small *bistro* frequented by the more lively inhabitants and by card-players. Here sitting with her father, a friend of the *patron*, she watched him begin to play cards and then develop into an inveterate gambler.

'They never spoke and if their eyes met he would turn away or he would laugh and mock.

'I will tell you of their only meetings over a long time.

'At the midsummer festival, when night falls, the sky shines dark

blue, the windows light up, no curtains pulled, tables are in the open air—she snatched a piece of bread out of his hand as he sat at one of them and, dancing past him—ate it! How strange were her impulses!

‘Later in the year, one evening, they passed each other on the country road as he was returning with his loot from the woods. The country looks different then when the mists rise, the houses and trees seeming like wrecks floating in clouds. He boldly sang a few bars of a ribald song, she replied with a sad ballad in a shrill little voice, but whereas his broke off he could hear hers long after she was lost in the mist.

‘Then in the winter she saw him chopping logs in a wood; no doubt he had been setting or seeking his traps. She was collecting faggots and fir-cones. Through the trees he shouted “Go away! go away!” She cried out “Wait, wait, I am going”. But she let fall her faggots, knelt down beside them and made them into a pile which she set on fire. Did she look very small and cold, there, I wonder? Frightened, but alert like a hare? Did she look still a child? First the smoke, then the flames rose between them and she stared through the fire, hoping perhaps that he would come and warm himself on the other side; but although he stopped chopping he remained quite still, not making a sign, and she raced, raced home. Nor did he make any sign afterwards.’

Charles paused. He must have seen us lying there like effigies of ourselves, or like the green lizard and the golden snake on the hill-side asleep.

But we were awake and listening.

He went on: ‘Blank months passed yet she missed nothing about him during that time. She knew the colours of the scarves he knotted round his neck and those he liked best, she knew the places he went to and whether he won or lost at his games.

‘You must remember he never spoke to anyone about the things that mattered to him, perhaps because he was superstitious. He had many superstitions and these she began to notice. For instance he invariably made an expedition to Marseilles or laid his highest stakes on a Monday or when the moon was full or on the 1st or 11th of the month. He seemed to believe that these were times of luck for him. Sure enough he did seem to make money on these days and once he won a very large sum indeed. On such occasions his whole appearance would change. Filled with extraordinary strength, his face transformed—shall we say by a look of Etruscan avidity—he would swagger about, and his mocking laughter would infect all his com-

panions. Gambling spread like a fire through the town but smouldering—underground—yet flames would leap up: a fight here, a shot there, the police on the alert, rumours of fortunes accumulating in secret banks, men armed and out for revenge!—a shot in a bar left a man dead—those were extraordinary days! One full moon he played with a gang shifting their ground from Marseilles and even then he won, and his fame grew.

'She never spoke either about these things—their silence seemed their invisible and only bond—but went shopping in the market or sat at her door like other girls. If his baleful eyes ever met hers they flashed from a crowd in the street or were raised sullenly from his cards.

'Then she began to avoid him as though such frail yet fierce contact could no longer be borne. Absence, total absence was preferable. She took some work on the other side of the town and vanished from his sight. And because she was lost to him he became conscious of her absence and began to seek her cunningly but was always frustrated; then he would wager to himself that he could find her; now here, he would bet, now there—but still to no purpose for she had determined to cut herself off.

'His moods were now morose, churlish, perverse, taciturn.

'You might ask why he did not inquire about her, but to have brought his instincts within reason would have been impossible for him; he treated his feelings as a secret force and knew that by talking about them it would fail; he could only preserve it by some faith he had in his power to challenge fate and it was the sensation of his emotions as they mounted through the game he played which gave him his incomparable excitement, and, should they reach a climax, his—shall we say—ecstasy.

'She, in the meantime, for all her determination, could not—as she said afterwards—"get rid of him"; his form seemed always beside her and she pondered on his fortune or misfortune.

'One spring day she noted that it was 11th of the month and a Monday. He would be in Marseilles; he would be playing high and she wildly fancied should he win might he not leave for America? Should he lose kill himself? She was resless, put her hand to everything she could think of for distraction, until no more to do, longing for air, she left the house and started to walk towards the town. The road skirted it and soon she sat down on a wall and looked over the long distance towards the mountains. It was strangely light and the olives were silver with long shadows. Suddenly over the low roof of a house appeared the moon—brighter than she had ever seen it—rounder! Over all the land shone the full moon.

'The full moon, the 11th of the month, a Monday—not two conditions, but all three of the gambler's conditions, had come together.

'Then as though grazed by a shot she jumped to her feet and began to run: she ran down the road which led towards the olives, she ran where she had sung her song, ran, ran; she took the turn to the left which led up into the woods and between the light and shadowy trunks, through the marvellous light which came from the sky, across the speckled ground which seemed like the pebble-strewn path leading the way in the fairy story, she ran, and did not stop till she came to the place where she had lighted the fire.

'There she stumbled to her knees.

'The silent woods stretched away on all sides and she crouched there amazed, panting, looking, listening.

'Need I tell you she then saw him leaning against a tree, his hands on his gun.'

'How did he catch her?' cried Jojo, 'in a trap? with a gin? or with his gun did he shoot her?'

'He caught her sure enough,' said Charles, 'but think how impossible it was that she would go there that night—a mad gamble! He risked all—the whole happiness of his life, maybe, and hers! for he would never, it's certain, have tried such a thing again or indeed anything else for her: a last throw! Defiance! Pride! Relish!' Charles finished the wine—'but how was she drawn to that place?'

Jojo was throwing peach stones in the air and catching them.

'Well,' said Theodora, 'they were married. You see he is working for the time being as a builder; he talks more now; he still makes money; they say he will soon have a vineyard of his own.'

The conversation changed to vines and wines; Theodora's daughter went into the house; a Château was described on the borders of the wild and lonely woods of Concors and la Gardiole.

'Oh,' said Theodora, 'that reminds me! Lil is going to a ball to-night. Lil! Lil!' she called, 'you have forgotten to iron your dress!'

This was the sign for us to leave. As we were saying goodbye Li' came out carrying a long dress on her arm and an iron in her other hand. We looked back when we reached the jeep and saw her standing in her red blouse and white shorts ironing yards of turquoise silk on the Roman stone in the sun. But as we should be gone and the rest of the household and the workmen were falling asleep, there would be no one to watch her or to put his ear to the ground.

Young English Poets 1956—II



Dannie Abse

THE RACE

We three crouched down ready to go,
Past, Present and Future. Although
the race was rigged, we didn't know.

Now, my head low in shy disgrace,
I move into the second place
and try to hold this killing pace

and gain my second breath. I curse,
seeing the countryside in reverse:
the road slide back to where I was.

I feel my formed face change. And run
yet faster to let Thy Will be done.
Look, I spurt towards Kingdom Come.

Behind me I hear the Present shout:
'Why don't they jeer and carry me out;
what is the silence all about?'

The old dream I carry on my back
is the chaos the other two lack.
I sprint to the inside of the track.

Drawing near I hear the Future cry:
'I am your death and prophesy,
but in transforming you I die.'

Just in front that champion lies.
Our four legs together harmonize
till I pass him for the final prize.

In the stadium the brash crowd roar.
I know what they are calling for;
but will my fading dream endure?

Here is the Hangman and the Tree,
shapes of some green allegory;
I run towards the world to be.

Now I'm the Future who was the Past,
at last I lead who once was last.
I round another lap, sprinting fast.

Ahead I see the winning post.
I finish first and so have lost
and speed into my walking ghost.

Thomas Blackburn

THE LUCKY MARRIAGE

I often wonder, as the fairy story
Tells how the little goose-girl found her prince,
Or of the widowed queen who stopped her carriage
And flung a rose down to the gangling dunce,
What is the meaning of this lucky marriage
Which lasts forever, it is often said;
Because I know too well such consummation
Is not a question of a double bed,
Or of the bridal bells and royal procession
With twenty major-domos at its head.

At least its bride and groom must be rejected.
The fairy godmother will only call
On Cinders scrubbing tiles beside the chimney
While her proud sisters foot it at the ball;
From all but the last son without a birth-right

The beggar woman hoards her magic seed.
 Well, if they'd had the good luck of their siblings
 And found occasion kinder to their need
 They would have spent their breath on natural pleasures
 And had no time for murmurs in the night.
 They heard because they were condemned to silence,
 And learnt to see because they had no light.

I mean the elder son and cherished sister
 Know but the surface of each common day;
 It takes the cunning eye of the rejected
 To dip beneath that skin of shadow play
 And come into the meaning of a landscape.
 I think that every bird and casual stone
 Are syllables thrust down from some broad language
 That we must ravel out and make our own.
 Yet who is ever turned towards that journey
 Till deprivations riddle through the heart,
 And so I praise the goose-girl and the scullion
 Who lie together by the refuse cart.

And yet all images for such completion
 Somehow by-pass its real ghostliness,
 Which can't be measured by one sweating finger
 Upon a salt and carnal nakedness.
 Although two heads upon a single pillow
 May be the metaphor which serves it best,
 No lying down within a present moment
 Will give the outwardgoing any rest;
 It's only when we reach beyond our pronouns
 And come into ourselves that we are blest.
 Is this the meaning of the lucky marriage
 Which lasts forever, it is often said,
 Between the goose-girl and the kitchen servant,
 Who have no wedding ring or mutual bed?

D. J. Enright

MONKEY

Once again the Year of the Monkey is here.
I was born in the Year of the Monkey—
Surely a fellow can talk about himself a bit,
in his own year?

Monkeys are like poets: more than human.
Which is why they do not take us very seriously.
Not to be taken seriously is rather painful.
To a corner of my cage I retired, mysteriously,
And had sad thoughts. (They may have been deep.)
Big eyes damp with a semi-permanent tear, my thin hands
held my heavy head from tumbling into sleep.

But even boredom bored me. I hurled myself from bar
To bar, swung on my aching tail, gibbered and grunted
with all the expected lack of finesse.
If you do a thing at all, do it well: so I hunted
avidly for the fleas which in fact I do not possess.

Exercise is always good. Daruma lost his legs
through meditating overlong and deleteriously:
Now they call him a saint, and use him as a paperweight.
'Thank God for Monkey,' thus spake a kindly spectator,
backing towards the gate,
'Monkey saves us from taking ourselves too seriously!'

Whereupon he straightened his tie, murmured something
about an important committee . . .
You can have too much exercise. I went back to my niche,
put on my thinking face, sad and full of pity.
Proudly refused a banana. All night suffered hunger's itch.

But in the next town—who can tell?
You may like to know that in Chinese
My name (though I cannot write it, being less well-
informed than some of the flock)
Has the meaning, 'Monkey comes to Town'.

I think you will find my name on our posters—down
there, just below the performing pekinese.
Somebody ought to tell the town I'm coming.
Next year belongs to the Cock.

A COUNTRY IN A MIRROR

In a mirror: nicely held, yet somehow cracked.
Is it what the author found, too easily, to say,
or what he lacked?—
The wise words of Confucius fill a space
Below a lovely photograph so well, and lend it
intellectual face.

What do the shadow puppets tell us?
They are dumb. And yet they speak
Less darkly than the author:
'This place does not resemble:
It is itself alone, it is unique'.
And in that, better—so we must conjecture—
than us and our poor land.

The crowded picture hits out like a flattened hand:
Those smiling hordes of children, those cropped heads,
those noble beards—
Something which we cannot love, in fact can only fear:
Better than us, better than our poor land,
With better words of better wisdom, bitter for us to hear.

'Why are we the wisest people in the world?—
For finding out the compass, but not America,'
And all those other verses, in scrolls still furled,
Like that which made the cruel dragon mend his ways.

More popular than ours—their popular songs;
Dragons how finer than our two-man horse!
So much more clearly righted, those ancient and much
clearer wrongs.
Like in a book. A book alas that will not end.

Just over there, beyond the camera's curtain,
Was the man we could have understood.

He felt a little tired, or grieved for some small
modern wrong,
His smile was too uncertain.

And so you do not see him in this mirror,
Though all his friends display their glittering teeth.
And yet you see him always, in that mirror
Which shows your wrinkles, bluish chin and greying hair—

A man much like yourself, you know.
You ought to write a book to tell him so.

John Holloway

ONE-ACT FOR ONE ON BARE BOARDS

The long silence was broken last week.
Look now where some stranger's going to speak.

*I stand among the wide-open doors
In the middle of the wide carpetless floors:
Let the previous proprietors
Answer me back and tell the course
Of this house's history
That hangs now sky still all round me.*

No one hears a single word you said.
Those previous occupants are all dead.

*Let them speak out, although they died:
Let them take shape, slow as a tide,
Curd and congeal to winding-sheet whiteness
Down from their supernatural brightness
Or like smoke, up out of the black
Earth where they pause, upon their back.*

Ghosts don't want to come here any more.
They let a living man hold the floor.

YOUNG ENGLISH POETS 1956-II

*What is that live man, till he hears
The slow firm voice of his forebears,
Save a mere pert cox-comb, that will
Scrabble all day, on his dung-hill?
And who thus answers boldly in
The blue dark of before dawn?*

This is the house itself speaks to you.
But you make the house's voice, the ghosts' too.

INSTRUCTIONS TO A PAINTER

Painter, never restore
A younger colour to the hand or face.
Give every line and shadow its established place
Firmly, put more,
Rather than fewer: if they lose their scars,
Veterans will come to doubt they saw the wars.

We know. And so we live
Reconciled to the earth's urbane rotation.
And though with tantrums and with fits of aberration
And moods, we have
Our course: like children or apprentices,
We come back all ways to the master's ways.

Or if we falter—I
Am unsure which is water, which is oil,
Up in the mind's long harbours—you must squint and toil
All day, must try
To make paint irresistibly show
What eyes just barely glimpse, teach what we know.

THE PAINTER ANSWERS

Sir, it is not
My work: neither to plot
An illustration for a text you find
Austere enough for pride, yet somehow kind,
Nor to preserve

The hereditary fortune of a handsome girl.
These, and the outlandish ends I serve
Being different as the oyster, surely, and the pearl.

My paint must grow
By its own law: no
Alien thing lives with this prickly star
That conflagrates the sand each hundredth year,
And that can turn
At once into a fountain and a flame,
And in one act both freeze and burn
Because art's climax needs must be its mausoleum.

That summer over
At once I turn the lover,
Tramp, toper, idle man: the fountain-head
And oozy hollows of the dark stream-bed
Indifferently
Secrete my wealth. Let others weep, shout, dance
Or strive. I drowse soundlessly,
A heron or angler, I can rest and hunt at once.

Jenny Joseph

PERSEPHONE RETURNS

I sit on the bank and mourn
Absent friends, the sun
Shining on other walls;
Clouds above different trees.

I sit at noon and watch
The oily light glare up
From flat unlayered water
Separate from all I know:

But most from my good self
That could love the sun and stand
Thought of the endless hours;
That tired, but woke again.

I sit, and in my hand
All the scraps of the years
All projects, all allures
Into the land of the strong—
All suffocate, all drowned.

The old familiar rises
Possessive from the mud
And slips the arm along
The dreaded obvious path—
Once evitable return.

It asks that light should fade,
For rain to hide the dead,
Early dark draw the curtain;
For Summer to be gone
Unasking Winter come.

Standing I see reflected
Small sun at the Nadir.
With coward's satisfaction
I greet the last chance gone
Of getting to where other actions are.

I move, my shadow thin
Old day in the old way again begun.
Welcomed by the dear familiar, I mourn
Only these present trees now, this local sun.

Pat Kavanagh

SONG

June her Danae shower lets fall
Over the purple judas tree.
On me her coins are wasted, all
Flowers are premature for me.

Wiser to take them, spend them, go
Richer to winter as men count?
Perhaps I would if I could, but so
Make winter longer by that amount.

For my true summer is away,
No sun can understudy her.
With all my sweet in one bouquet
I must defy glib Lucifer.

She has her seasons; solstices
Rich and sour, bright and black.
But though my system's Ptolemy's
I use her heart for almanac.

And so my truth keeps bright, the shine
Dulled only by the fear that she
Spends two summers, hers and mine,
Kissing beneath a judas tree.

SPEECH FROM AN UNWRITTEN PLAY

What do you see on the underside of leaves?
A fairer colour? Or a simile
for hair blown back by a similar wind?
Tell me. Take my hand.
There. And tell me. I should like to know
exactly. So hard to be precise.
I spend my life sitting at this window,
I am much alone, and as I watch
I wonder what my friend would make of it.
What you would say at the end
of our watching together, when we turned
having seen each other at last in all that beauty,
that frightening waste. You think it a waste
it is oh yes a waste and I am wasted
watching leaves that die and reappear
again and again the same above and below
but I am not the same no never
not for two minutes the same I do not know

who I am but who we are I know
when we are together. No.
Do not remove your hand. I do not permit it.

Quentin Stevenson

FOR A SON

ON THE HOLY MILE AT WALSINGHAM

One labour dead, more beasts to slay,
And age has still no heart to break;
What we create is what we lay
At whatever shrine we will not seek.

His three years' light can comprehend
No shade between the fee I pay
And his own faith that at the end
He will find Christ on His mother's knee.

Empires by sunset, I by prayer—
Each has a ritual for decay—
Dying turn back, as here, to dower
With better childhoods their bright day.

And now he sleeps; but the broken track,
Burrowing pebbles in my feet,
Cries as I stumble, for my lack
Is God's lack . . . and the boy must reap.

Carol Stewart

ALL SOULS' NIGHT

All Souls' night is a sad night.
Firelight, water and candlelight.
A bowl of water and walnut shells.
The shells are the boats of the dead. The souls
Of the dead are the candles burning,

In each shell a candle, the shells turning
This way and that in the draught, while the flame
In each burns silently down to the rim.

All Souls' night is a sad night.
Children's faces by firelight.
The quick and the dead, and the quick have lit
Candles in memory of the dead
And sail them in a bowl, a bowl of water.
And not in remembrance only.
For this night, this one night,
By firelight, water and candlelight,
They half believe that the dead return,
This one night as the candles burn,
And their half belief fills the room
Till the air breathes, till the dead come
To suffer again that passage of water,
The yearning moment of departure.
And of those that watch at least one
Is nearer to them than to the room
Of things and living. Hands reach to hold,
Hands draw her, her soul goes, cold
But befriended, out on to the water.
There's her metropolis. There streets are
Again places to walk in and those
Who walk beside her are those she knows.
The streets are lit there, lights burn
Comfortably at every turn—
She does not see the pavements lap
Black and silent under each step—
She would go now. I know she'd go.
I cannot hold her though I know
All of her mind. The lights draw her
And the soft undertow of water
And most the friendliness of the dead,
The being known and countenanced.

All Souls' night. We are all here.
Children's faces round the fire.
The beginning of the journey and the end.

We burn candles to defend
Our bit of time, but also to remember
That there is no defence. November
Comes. Stars faint now, air quite still.
Coming and going of souls. The defenceless will.

*On All Souls' Night one scoops out walnut shells for the children, fixes tiny
candles in them and floats them in the dark in a bowl of water.*

ON NOT WANTING TO WRITE

Words will bind where truth will not be bound.
Words will make patterns where there is no pattern.
I do not care any longer how they sound.
I do not want to let myself be governed
By them, because they cheat, exclude, conceal,
Create the expelling image. No poet now
Can make images that raise and heal
And subsume darkness. That has gone for now.
We have to learn to live in the dark
Because our images, our lights, are lies,
Leave too much out, too pretty or too stark.
We have to learn again to use our eyes.
We have to live in the dark. We must be free
To learn to bear what we can hardly see.

Anthony Thwaite

FROM HOME

He is to all things stranger
And exile everywhere,
Finding no place familiar
Though breathing native air.
Because all time moves, he
Asks, 'Who is less than such
Exile in any country
Where nothing he can touch,
Taste, hear, pronounce or see
Can comfort him with much?'

Worn carpet; chair where pressure
Of his own body lies
In strange and ghostly posture;
Wall where his travelling eyes
Have made the labyrinthine
Pattern a treacherous chart—
'Each,' he says, 'each is mine,
Unmastered from the start,
The tortuous design
Of vagrancy at heart.'

And yet the real exile,
The traveller beyond
Real seas, may find that while
He moves through space, the bond
Of time is broken and
Strangeness is reconciled,
Here he begins to stand
Like an uprooted child
Who finds the new, feared land
Is known as well as wild.

Though 'home is where the heart is'
Makes comfort cold for those
Rooted yet rootless strangers
Who wear familiar clothes,
The proverb is good luggage
For exiles far from home
Stowing among the steerage
Their birthright from the womb,
Lacking the sterile courage
Which sours a wonted room.

The Interview

An episode from an unpublished novel



'Are you quite sure he's not in? It's very important.'
The attendant told Gerard Sorme:
'I'm only going by what the board says. Look, y'see, sir—"Mr Nunne—Out". It was like that when I came on an hour ago.'
'Oh, I see. There's no way of checking what time he went out?'
'Afraid not, sir. Mr Jenkins might know, but he went off when I came on. You could leave a message with me if you like.'
'That's all right, thanks. If he does come, you might say . . . no, don't say anything. It's all right. Good afternoon.'

He had remembered the police and decided not to leave his name. He walked slowly down the steps, his hands in the overcoat pocket, to where the bicycle leaned against the pavement. Cold sunlight threw the bare shadow of the chestnut tree across the railings of the churchyard and across the big Daimler parked opposite.

There was no more sunlight when he turned off Holborn Viaduct; the grey front of the church had a pumice-stone quality that chilled the skin, like cold water. He rang the bell of the mission house; behind him, the bicycle suddenly fell on to the pavement, the rear wheel spinning; he was leaning against the wall when Friar Maunsell opened the door. He said:

'Hi, Robin. Is Father O'Marney available?'

Maunsell said: 'Hello, dear. Do come in. Oh, your hands *are* cold. But you've been cycling, of course.'

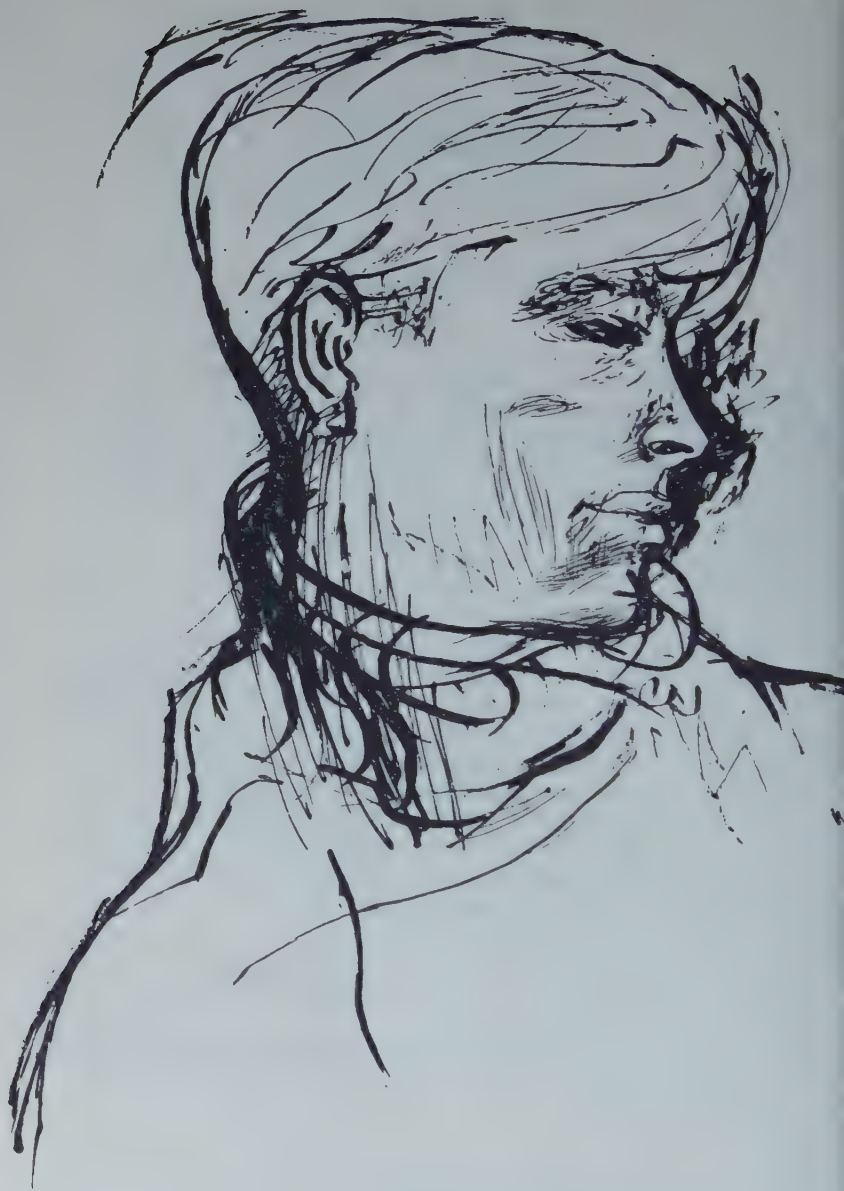
The thin woman's hands released Sorme's; from the room immediately inside the door, the young face of a priest looked out. His foreign voice asked:

'For me?'

'No, for Father O'Marney.'

He turned to Sorme, saying:

'I don't know whether he's awake. If he's not, you can stay and talk to me. Would you like some tea, Gerard?'



COLIN WILSON: a portrait by *Colin Spencer*

'Er . . . are you just about to have some?'

'Yes. Come and sit down.'

He threw open the door that faced them; it was the small room where visitors were received; its frosted windows overlooked the street. Maunsell produced matches from the pocket of his habit; kneeling, he lit the gas-fire.

'Well, this is a pleasant surprise. It's lovely to see you. Sit down.'

He took Sorme's coat and hung it behind the door. He came back and leaned over Sorme's chair, the pale face smiling invitation:

'And how are you, dear boy? How is your disgraceful sex life?'

Sorme said, grinning:

'You take a brotherly interest in my sins.'

'But of course, dear boy. I wouldn't like to see you damned. But of course, you'd like to be damned, wouldn't you, Gerard?'

'I *am* damned,' Sorme said. 'So are you.'

'Oh, I hope not.'

He straightened with prim suddenness and sat in the opposite arm-chair. Sorme leaned forward, closer to the fire. The room was cold. He stretched out his hands, saying:

'I think you commit my sins vicariously, Robin. Isn't that why you ask me about them so often?'

'Oh dear no. You don't commit my type of sin. I'd really *loathe* your trollops, really. But do tell me how they are. How's . . . er . . . thingummerjig . . . the one you'd been to bed with last time I saw you?'

Sorme stared at the fire; he said solemnly:

'Dead. She died of tetanus on top of St Vitus dance.'

'Really? I'm sorry. . . Oh, but you're joking! Aren't you? No, be serious. If you don't want to tell me about your love life, let's talk of something else.'

'All right,' Sorme said. 'What were you doing in Whitechapel this morning?'

'How did you know? Did you see me?'

'Yes, I did. Were you going to see Oliver Glasp?'

'Ah, no. To see Willie. He's a dear little boy of ten whose step-mother wants me to instruct him as a Catholic. A sweet little boy, with curly hair and such a lovely mouth. . .'

'Sounds a little bastard,' Sorme said.

'No, really, Gerard!'

'I thought maybe you went to see how Oliver looked after the double murder.'

'Oh, your friend Glasp. No, I couldn't care less about *him*. But you should meet Willie. . .'

'Listen, Robin. Tell me something. When you came to my place and dropped those hints about Oliver being the Whitechapel killer, how serious were you?'

'Not very. Excuse me just a moment, Gerard, while I go and get the tea.'

'What about Father O'Marney?'

'Oh, yes. Do you want to rush out on me so soon? Wait a little. I'll ask Mrs Sinclair if he's awake.'

Alone, Sorme stood up and crossed to the window. The room was in half darkness now. Vague silhouettes of people rippled beyond the distorted glass. He picked up the slim paper-bound pamphlet from the windowsill: *The Glories of Mary for the Sake of Her Son*, by J. H. Newman. Someone kicked the door; Robin Maunsell hooked it open with his foot and came in with the tea tray.

'Father O'Marney is at the moment having tea. In a quarter of an hour precisely he will be free, then you can go up. And he now knows you're here. All right?'

'Fine. Thank you, Robin.'

'In the meantime, have some tea with me.'

He carried the casual table from under the window, and placed it between the armchairs.

Sorme said: 'Do you know Austin Nunne?'

'Yes, vaguely. Do you?'

'Yes. What do you know about him?'

'Very little. You take sugar, don't you? That he has more money than is good for him. That his father owns half Somerset and has hell's own pull on the British Council. That he's a homosexual and a sadist.'

'He *is*? Are you sure?'

'Why yes, dear boy. Why?'

'How do you know?'

'Well . . . do you really want me to be specific?'

'Yes.'

'All right. I happen to know an ex-boyfriend of Austin's called Derek Pattison. . . '

'Where is he now?'

'Steady, my child, steady. Have some tea and biscuits. Why all this interest?'

'Tell me first. I'll explain afterwards. Where is this ex-boyfriend?'

'In New Zealand, as a matter of fact.'

'How many people did he tell about . . . about Austin?'

'How do I know, Gerard? Not many, I imagine. He told me when he was drunk and rather sentimental, and he doesn't often get drunk

or sentimental. Now tell me why you want to know?"

Sorme considered the clean-shaven, unweathered face with doubt. He said:

'Well . . . in a word—because the police suspect him of being the Whitechapel killer.'

'What! But how fantastic! How preposterous! Are you sure?'

'Pretty sure. It's too complicated to explain, but I'm quite certain of it.'

'But . . . d-don't they know . . . I mean, don't they know he just *can't* be?'

'Why can't he?'

Maunsell glanced at the door; leaning forward, he enunciated distinctly:

'Because he's homosexual! That's why!'

Sorme cleared his throat, feeling his chin with his fingertips.

'Well, all I know is they do.'

'Oh, but it's too silly for words. Is he a friend of yours?'

'Yes.'

'Well, don't you think you'd better advise him to get out of the country until the police catch this maniac, or he commits another murder and clears Austin of the possibility?'

'I guess so. The only complication is . . . oh, never mind. Pass the biscuits, would you?'

'Do you intend speaking to Father O'Marney about this?'

'Well, not exactly. I wanted to speak to him about Oliver. But there is a sort of connection.'

'I shouldn't, Gerard. Really! What is the point? He's confined to his bed. Do you expect him to solve the thing without getting out of bed, l-like that man—Sherlock Holmes' brother—what's his name. . .?'

'No, maybe you're right. Still, Robin, I need some help on this.'

'Why not explain to me?'

'Oh, there's not much point. I want to ask him about Oliver, that's all.'

There was a light rap on the door; the Scotswoman looked in:

'Excuse me. . . Oh, Mr Sorme, the Father would like to see ye as soon as you're free.'

He said: 'Oh, thank you.' As the door closed behind her, Maunsell said:

'Oh, damn and blast!'

'I'll finish my tea first,' Sorme said.

'No, you hadn't better. He tends to get a little querulous when he's kept waiting. Take your tea up with you. I'll see you when you come down.'

The priest's voice called: 'Come in.'

The short, overcoated man who sat on the side of the bed glowered at Sorme from behind thick lenses. Sorme said:

'I'm sorry, Father. I didn't know you had someone with you. Shall I come back?'

'No, no, do come in. Mr Cloone is going.'

'How do you do?' Sorme said.

The little man frowned, nodding.

Father O'Marney was propped against pillows; he wore white pyjamas now instead of the cassock; otherwise he seemed in all ways unchanged. The room was less overheated. The parchment hands touched Sorme's lifelessly.

'Sit down, Gerard. It is good of you to come.'

Sorme said, automatically: 'Not at all.' He sensed hostility in the man sitting on the bed, and reacted by behaving formally. When the priest looked at the little man there was abandonment of exhaustion in his smile, without implications.

'Mr Cloone is a friend of Oliver, Gerard.'

'Indeed,' Sorme said.

'Hardly a friend,' the little man said; there was a brittle quality about his voice that made Sorme think of grains of crushed sand.

Sorme said, with secret malice:

'How did you come to meet Oliver, Mr Cloone?'

'I had a disagreement with him once.'

'Not a quarrel, I hope?'

'No,' the little man said harshly, 'a disagreement.'

'Ah, I see. Yes, well Oliver is very definite in many of his opinions, and dislikes being contradicted.'

The cold eyes fixed on Sorme; the dislike was unconcealed now his face was away from the priest.

Father O'Marney's quiet voice said:

'Mr Cloone organizes many clubs for boys and young men, Gerard.'

Sorme said coldly:

'I see.'

The little man said:

'It is my opinion that young people should learn to mix with the rest of society. And if they don't want to, they should be made to.'

Sorme suppressed the irritation that discharged itself into his blood; he said with deliberation:

'I can see you'd make an excellent Boy Scout organizer, Mr Cloone.'

'I have organized Boy Scouts,' the little man said. 'Young men like

your friend might have benefited by it if he'd been a member while he was young enough to learn.'

'To learn what, Mr Cloone?'

The little man's vindictiveness reached him before he spoke; the anger made him look like a small rodent. He said:

'To be sane and useful to your fellow men.'

Sorme stared at his unpolished shoes, saying, with deliberate slowness, to appear impartial:

'Er . . . that's very interesting, Mr Cloone. I cannot say I see eye to eye with you.'

'Of course you don't. You'd condemn yourself if you did.'

Sorme's anger made it difficult to argue coolly; he felt the blood darkening his face, and breathed deeply to preserve the indifference. He said:

'Since you don't know me personally, Mr Cloone, that statement seems rather rash and silly.'

He was aware that his logic was being swept away by the anger, and was angry with himself for letting it. The excited face was staring at him, thrust forward; the voice was almost a hiss:

'Is it? Isn't it true that you take a perverse pride in your so-called individualism?'

Sorme said brutally:

'What I do suggest is that if you spent less time on futile stupidities like boys' clubs, and more time examining yourself, you might have more reason for pride in your own individualism.'

The little man stood up; the weak blue eyes glinted behind the lenses; his voice was thick:

'What right have you to speak in that way of boys' clubs? Father. . .'

The priest had listened with closed eyes; now he smiled faintly:

'Now, Mr Cloone, you began by provoking Gerard, which was not polite.'

The little man said hotly:

'Father, are you supporting him or me?'

'Neither of you. In the writings of the holy Fathers, it is not a sin to retreat into solitude and possess the soul in silence. Neither is it a sin to do good work in society.'

The little man was now so angry that he stuttered:

'But . . . but . . . you're not saying, Father, you're not trying to say that the Fathers of the Church. . .'

He raised his finger, pointing at Sorme. For a moment Sorme felt sorry for him. The priest said firmly:

'It is not for me or for you to judge, Mr Cloone.'

The little man's indignation had vulgarized him; it made him seem rather comic. He said, with a gesture that was like shaking his fist:

'I . . . I'm going, Father . . . excuse me. . .'

The priest said faintly:

'This is the second time you have left me in anger, Mr Cloone.'

The little man stopped at the door; he seemed undecided; he muttered:

'I'm sorry, Father. Goodbye.'

The door closed quietly after him. Sorme said:

'Why didn't you warn me you had such a bloody fool with you, Father.'

'He's not entirely a fool, Gerard. He's a very good and sincere little man, and he's undergoing a lot of provocation.'

'I'm not surprised. He'd provoke a saint.'

'These aren't saints, Gerard. Cloone is a brilliant youth organizer. His wife died a year ago, and now people are spreading rather nasty rumours about him. While he was out last night, someone broke all his windows.'

Sorme said: 'Hell, that's pretty bad. I'm sorry I got so angry.'

'Come and sit here.'

Sorme sat on the edge of the bed for a moment. The cold hand took his for a moment, and pressed, then released. His hand groped under the eiderdown, and came out with the slim, black-bound book.

'I've a present for you, Gerard. The print is too small for my eyes.'

Slim silver letter on the spine read: *The Dark Night of the Soul*.

'Thank you, Father. That's . . . very good of you.'

'Now, tell me how it is with you. Do you still consider retreating into a monastery?'

'I . . . I hadn't thought of it lately, Father. I've got some different problems. Can I talk to you about it?'

'Isn't that why you come here?'

'Yes . . . but this isn't about me. Father, what do you know about sadists?'

'Why, do you know one?'

'I . . . no.'

'Then why do you ask me?'

'You see. . . Oh, it's a long story, Father, and I don't want to bother you with it all. But you remember Oliver's dreams of the murders, don't you?'

'I don't understand.'

'You know he dreamed of murders?'

'Yes. But you said *the* murders.'

'That's just it, Father. He's been telling me about the dreams this morning, and there's no room for doubt. He dreamed about the Whitechapel murders months before they happened.'

He watched the relaxed face for contradiction or objection, but the eyes remained closed.

'I can't doubt it, Father. Unless Oliver's deliberately lying about what he dreamed. . .'

'Very well. But how does this concern you now?'

'For a strange reason, Father. I seem to be getting curiously caught up in these murders. To begin with, Oliver claims that there's been one murder more than the police know about—he says he saw the killer strangle an old tramp and drop his body in the Thames.'

'He dreamed this?'

'Yes, but, Father . . . if his other dreams were accurate . . . is there any reason to doubt this one?'

'Perhaps not. But why do you bother yourself with all this? Do the murders concern you in any way?'

'Well. . . I spent this afternoon being questioned by a police psychiatrist, who told me the police intend checking up on another friend of mine. Austin Nunne—do you know him?'

The priest shook his head.

'Austin's homosexual, and it sounds insane to suspect a homosexual of heterosexual murders. But if Oliver's right about the tramp. . .'

'Your friend is a sadist?'

'So they tell me. Stein told me this afternoon, and Friar Maunsell seems to have heard it, too.'

'Stein? Who is he?'

'Oh, some German psychiatrist. . .'

'Not Albert Stein?'

'Yes. Have you heard of him?'

'Certainly. I know him very well. He was in the same seminary in Rome with me in . . . oh, nineteen twenty-one.'

'Seminary? Was he ever a priest?'

'He was about to take orders. I left a year before he did, but we wrote to one another. We were both interested in the possibilities of psycho-analysis in the confessional. Then he became involved in politics—first Mussolini's syndicalists, then later, in Germany, with Hitler's National Socialists. Finally he took a degree in medicine and became a psychiatrist. We corresponded right up to nineteen thirty-one, when Hitler came to power. What is he doing in England?'

'He's helping the police in this search for the East End killer.'

'And he suspects this friend of yours. . .?'

'No, he's not as explicit as that. He knows Austin, too. I don't think he could really suspect him—just like that. . . No. I can't understand quite what he's up to. . .'

'I know Stein,' the priest said. 'He is not tortuous. He is a blunt man—a materialist, a typical Nazi. If he says the police suspect your friend, then they probably do.'

'That's not what I'm worried about. I believe him when he says the police can't afford to leave a single stone unturned. But . . . hell, it's a pity you don't know Austin, Father. You could tell me. I know nothing about sadists.'

He sat silent, waiting for Father O'Marney to speak. The silence lengthened; he became aware of the ticking of his watch, and automatically began to wind it. The priest said slowly:

'It seems to me . . . that your answer lies in a different line of inquiry. If Oliver dreamed of the murders . . . then why did he dream of them?'

'I don't follow you, Father.'

'What connection is there between Oliver and the man who kills prostitutes?'

'You mean maybe Oliver *knows* him? . . . personally?'

'No. There is a deeper bond than mere acquaintance.'

'I still don't follow you, Father.'

'Gerard . . . if your radio set began to pick up stations that no one else could hear, you might suspect there was something unusual about the valves in your set . . . some affinity of vibration between them and the unknown station. If Oliver dreams of a sadist, the same simple logic may apply. Introduce your sadistic friend to him and see the result.'

'I don't know that's a good idea, Father. They'd probably loathe one another. They've nothing in common. Oliver's too quiet—never expresses himself—and Austin's too . . . too facile in self-expression. They're nothing alike.'

'You mean Oliver is sincere and your other friend is insincere?'

'No, I don't mean that at all. In some ways Austin's more sincere than Oliver. At least he's more determined, and that's almost the same thing.'

'Is your friend Austin a Christian?'

The question took Sorme by surprise.

'A Christian? No. . . No, I don't suppose he is. Why do you ask?'

'Curiosity only, Gerard.'

Sorme said: 'He may be religious, in an odd sort of a way. That is . . . ideas mean more to him than people. He's a sort of a fanatic . . . Is that what you mean, Father?'

'No, Gerard. He is your friend. I take that as evidence that he has an . . . an inner life.'

'Thank you, Father.'

'No. But . . . has he an ethic that prevents him from killing?'

Sorme stood up and crossed to the window. From there he could see the quiet, empty yard of the nuns' school, with its single elm that had shed brown leaves over the asphalt.

'I . . . I don't know, Father. Frankly, I think the idea that Austin would kill is rubbish. He's too civilized.'

'No doubt you are right. But do you know anything of the impulses of the sadist?'

'No. I've borrowed a book from Stein on the subject.'

'Then let me tell you something, Gerard. The sadist may be a cultured, intelligent, easy-going man. . .'

Sorme interrupted him: 'Yes, Stein told me that, Father.'

Some movement in the white face made him conscious of the exhaustion that lay behind the close eyelids; he said apologetically:

'Please go on.'

The voice seemed to come from a distance:

'Try to understand, Gerard. Any man might become a sadist without discipline. Any man with great vital energy could commit murder to satisfy his lust. Do you see why? Nature has set no bounds. Fundamental human decency is a myth. Like the fundamental decency of tigers. The natural man is a tiger.'

Sorme said dubiously: 'I see, Father.'

'Fortunately, that does not happen. The men who reason enough to discard morality discard their tiger-nature, too, and become tame . . . like sheep. But, Gerard, do you think that this will always be so? God wills that men should grow closer to Him; He does not will the death of the instincts, nor even the death of the reason. A day must come—perhaps it has come already—when men will pass through a hell of the flesh to reach a heaven of the spirit. A day will come when the saint will become first the worst type of sinner. . .'

'Like Saint Augustine?'

'Worse, far worse, Gerard. To give himself to the most bestial impulses of nature in order to discover whether the spirit can be killed by the flesh.'

Sorme scratched the short hairs on the back of his neck; the quietness of the voice made him afraid that it would stop.

'And do you think Austin sounds like that, Father?'

'I do not know Austin. I tell you this, Gerard, because it is possible that I shall not live long enough to see you achieve your own spiritual end. Remember it, Gerard, and listen carefully. Before you

reach your own goal, you may have to pass through a time of great spiritual aridness, a deadness of the soul. In that time, such men as Albert Stein will be poor comforters. Unless you can know that your spiritual life is proved by your capacity to fear spiritual death, you may break.'

Sorme said: 'Break?'

'Understand what happens to those who break, Gerard.'

'What . . . happens, Father?'

'The soul is afraid of the darkness. It reaches out for something solid, something real. If it is a soul like Oliver, it may turn to another human being . . . someone untouched by the corruption. But another kind knows only one escape—in the reality of the body, the reality of violence. Such a man could commit a sexual murder or drop a bomb on a sleeping city.'

The excitement seemed to hit him out of the half-dark where the priest's voice talked; he went back to the bed and took the hands that lay like discarded gloves on the counterpane; their coldness shocked him: he said with urgency:

'Father, do you understand what you're saying? Do you understand that this seems like clairvoyance? Has Oliver told you about the child—about Christine?'

'Who is Christine?'

It was a feeling like drunkenness that seemed to possess him, briefly, as if a blast of hot air had tossed his brain in its vortex; he said:

'Never mind Christine. Go on, Father, tell me, answer me now. Tell me what I want to know. What have I got to do?'

The tired voice was hardly more than a whisper, although every word came clearly in the silence:

'To learn to pray. To learn how to stop thinking. To learn how to love without ceasing.'

'To love what?'

'Everything. Broken bottles and stains on the wall. Your own hands and feet. Pray, Gerard, pray to be granted love of everything on earth instead of thought. . .'

'And people, Father, what about people?'

'Don't worry about them. Love of them will come later.'

He went back to the window. The playground was perceptibly darker. The wind brought the rustling of leaves to him.

'But . . . but damnation, how can I? Somewhere out there a mad killer strangles worn-out whores. This city is darker than Hell. Its daylight reality is like the smile on the face of a corpse. I don't know who I am or where I come from, or whether the man who

kills for pleasure is right or wrong. How can I pray, Father? What am I doing here? Why do these people take it for granted? What does it matter why Oliver dreams or whether Austin commits murder? I don't understand, and I don't know why I should care that I don't understand. It all seems irrelevant somehow. And if Robin Maunsell came in here now, I'd be ashamed of not understanding and talk about something practical. . .'

The priest's voice said:

'Don't, Gerard. . .'

It was so strong that he turned back to the bed with a sense of betrayal, as if the priest had duped him about his weakness; Father O'Marney's face was looking towards him now:

'Don't chase your own tail, Gerard. Don't think so much.'

He said hopelessly:

'What can I do, Father?'

Light from the passageway fell into the room as the door was opened; he looked round with irritation as the Scotswoman came in; the shaded lamp beside the bed lit suddenly.

'Will ye be ready for your medicine soon, Father? Och, you look worn out! You've been talking too much again.'

The priest ignored her. He had gripped Sorme's hands, as if to detain him:

'Remember what I told you, Gerard. Don't think so much.'

'No, Father. I'll leave you now. You should sleep.'

'That's right, Mr Sorme. He has visitors from nine in the morning until he goes to sleep at night. And no one thinks they're tiring him. Everyone thinks of themselves and their problems.'

The priest said, smiling: 'My hot water bottle is cold, Mrs Sinclair.'

'Goodbye, Father,' Sorme said. 'I'll come again soon, if I may.'

'Yes, come again. Come often. I shall be dead soon, shan't I, Mrs Sinclair?'

'Och, certainly you won't? Not if you sleep properly and don't catch anything. Monsigneur Blackett's eighty-nine and still hale.'

She had pulled out the blankets from under the mattress at the bottom of the bed, and taken out the padded hot water bottle. Her strong, thin arms wrenched up the mattress again and tucked the blankets in. She stood at the foot of the bed, holding the bottle against her stomach; to Sorme she seemed strangely hieratic. He tacitly surrendered to her vigilance, saying:

'Goodbye, Father. And thank you.'

At the top of the stairs, her unraised voice stopped him. She came down the corridor, noiselessly on the thick carpet.

'How did you find him, Mr Sorme?'

'Very well. No worse than last time, I think. What does the doctor say?'

Her small eyes seemed mistrustful.

'I didn't mean that way, Mr Sorme. He's as well as can be expected, physically. But did he seem at all . . . odd with you?'

'Why, no, Mrs Sinclair. Not at all. Why do you ask?'

'Och, nothing, except his mind wanders a little at times. It's to be expected. People do nothing but throw their worries at his head all day. If the doctor had his way, he wouldn't see anyone.'

'No. Undoubtedly you are right.'

Robin Maunsell came out of the room at the bottom of the stairs. He said:

'Hello, Gerard. Are you coming in here for ten minutes now?'

Sorme shrank from the contact; he looked at his watch, saying:

'Not right now, Robin. I'm due in Hampstead at seven o'clock.'

'But you've lots of time!'

'No. I'm coming in to see Father O'Marney again very soon. I'll see you then.'

'Oh, all right. But I'm sorry you have to go. I've a lot I wanted to talk about.'

Sorme said embarrassedly: 'Next time, eh, Robin?'

Outside, wheeling his bicycle to the road, he said aloud: 'Blast and damnation!' The wind cut damply against his face. It had gone, the certainty he had carried out of the upstairs room; the contact with the Scotswoman and Maunsell had dissipated it. The wind aroused a resistance of emotion that destroyed the last possibility of reconstructing it. There was more rain in the air.

A Last Interview with Brecht



There was no name by the door-bell, just the two letters B. B. The house was at the back of a courtyard off Chausseestrasse, which is a continuation of Friedrichstrasse, one of the busiest streets in East Berlin. Brecht occupied only half of the house, and I was led upstairs to his work-room at the back of it, where I found him with his secretary looking through photographs of Berliner Ensemble productions and picking out the ones to be sent to Moscow.

He hadn't either the Hemingway physique or the commanding voice which some of the stories about him suggest. He was a small man and he spoke in a soft, rather high-pitched voice which was insistent without having to be emphatic. I'm not sure whether it was his withdrawn, quietly doctrinaire way of talking that first made me think of a monk, but once the idea was there, everything encouraged it,—the thin hair brushed forward at the front, the thin grey workman's jacket hanging loose and low, and even the room, which was large and bright but monastic in the sparseness and simplicity of its furniture. There were chairs around the desk and around the table, there were books and pictures and a huge filing-cabinet, but altogether so little for such a large room that the dominant impression was of bare floorboards and bare whitewashed wall.

He spoke, too, rather like an abbot very patiently explaining points of doctrine; but in conversation, the doctrines didn't seem as rigid as they do in print, and the faith seemed more like a personal faith. He attacked bourgeois playwrights, as he had often attacked them before, for paying too little attention to the pressure of society on the individual character, but it was surprising when a comparison of Shakespeare with modern playwrights led to a pious expression of faith in the future:

In Shakespeare, if there is a cook he always behaves like a cook and you know he is a cook. Shakespeare is the greatest bourgeois

writer. He could see things for what they were, and he wasn't troubled by a bad conscience. Society was different then. Today though, unfortunately—and it is really unfortunate—a cook is only free to behave in a certain way. Not all the time, of course. When he is talking to someone equal to himself, then he has freedom. You could have a scene between a cook and a cigar merchant, for instance. But when he is with his superiors, no.—In fifty years' time, things will be different. We shall have reached a state where personality will be free. A man will cook because he has genius, or has good taste. Like the composer. What is his name? Rossellini? Rossini. But today a cook is only a cook.—And the bourgeois playwright fails to show that.

The prophecy is only an orthodox echo of what Marx said about the way the revolution would free the individual consciousness from the enslavement of capitalist society, and put like this, it sounded oddly naïve. But he spoke of this Utopian future with a warmth that was quite missing from anything he said about the unsatisfactory present.

If writers, like cooks, were all slaves of society, I wondered whether he believed them all to be equal, or some to be less enslaved than others.

What about playwrights living in the West but hostile to the societies they are living in, like Sartre and Arthur Miller?

Gut aber nicht ganz gut. They are good plays. They help to alter society now, but in fifty years' time when society is changed, no one will read them. They can't help this. It is the angle they write from.—If I look at your face from here, or from here (he got up and moved to my right), or from here (moving to my left), it is a different face.

But a good portrait can be painted from any angle.

Yes, but then you are free to choose the angle you paint from.

But what is it that deprives them of freedom to choose the angle? Is it because of what you said about bad consciences? That they feel guilty on account of the societies they are living in and feel themselves to be part of?

No, Sartre hasn't got a bad conscience. Why should he? He pulls himself away from the things he sees are wrong. But if he frees himself here (he touched his elbow), then he gets caught here (pointing to his knee), and by the time that he frees himself there, he gets caught up again here.

But can't he see where he isn't free and show that in his plays?

No, it's impossible for him to be objective.

I still don't see why. Because he belongs to a bourgeois society?



'The Caucasian Chalk Circle'

THE BERLINER ENSEMBLE AT THE PALACE THEATRE

'Mother Courage'



No, so does Einstein, but relativity isn't a bourgeois idea.

Well, take a play like *Les Mains Sales*—

That is the play about the Communist Party? I should have to read it again before I could judge. You see, I haven't read it since Khrushchev's last speech. That changes things a great deal, and it's impossible to predict things like that. Who could have said that was going to happen?

Odd though this sounded, it wasn't at all illogical from his point of view. If a play can only be good if it is useful and if usefulness means usefulness to the Communist cause, then it follows that a political speech can make a good play into a bad play overnight.

Discussing politics, Brecht was quite open about making usefulness his criterion. We talked of a Communist whose 'deviation' had cost him his life.

I was in Denmark when he made the speech, and I could see that it was dangerous, but I wouldn't have condemned him to death. At least, that is what I say, speaking from outside. I don't know. It may have been necessary. I am not a politician, and I am not in the Party. I am a Marxist but I have never been a Party Member.

But in principle you still hold to what you wrote in *Die Massnahme*?

(*Die Massnahme* is a didactic playlet¹ to prove that four Communist agitators are justified in killing a fifth who is so full of sympathy for the oppressed coolies that instead of obeying orders and inciting them to rebel, he tries to help them. This brings him into the foreground, which exposes his comrades to danger.)

To every word. But that is not a moral question whether the death of the young comrade is necessary. It is a matter of usefulness.

Surely it's a moral question, too. If it were only a matter of showing that the death is useful, then the play wouldn't be necessary.

It could be considered as a moral question, but not until you have taken part in the play and acted the part of the young comrade *and* one of the four agitators *and* a member of the Control Chorus. Then you have seen it from every angle and only then may you judge.

¹ *Lehrstück*. He compared his *Lehrstücke* with the Japanese No Plays and with didactic plays of Bacon's. No audience is required. They are widely used, he said, in East German schools, with children playing first one part and then another.

It seems to me that this leaves the word 'moral' without any meaning.

In literature too, usefulness was the criterion, and it is obvious that his basic objection to Ibsen was that his social criticism was no longer relevant. But his actual interpretation of *The Doll's House* was very odd indeed:

Ibsen had great intelligence and he was a sound playwright, but in a play like *The Doll's House*, what does he do? The husband is a banker, and he wants to see whether the wife has an equal right to be a banker. That is what she wants—to deal with accounts and financial affairs like her husband. But I don't think Ibsen knew very much about banking. And the play has no meaning for society today. To be a banker! Just the question of whether it's right for a woman to do the work of her husband. Isn't that what it is?

I think it's more negative. More the question of whether it's wrong for the husband to possess her and suppress her.

That's what you say. That doesn't interest me. Ha, we're all suppressed. You're suppressed. I'm suppressed. The real question is what Nora would do with her freedom if she had it.

But I don't think Ibsen was interested in that.

No, exactly.

And that was that. Ibsen had been found guilty. I went back to Shakespeare. If Shakespeare was the greatest bourgeois dramatist, I was curious to know how much respect Brecht would have for the text if ever he put on *Coriolanus*, as he had been planning to. A play is never 'translated' for the Berliner Ensemble, always 'adapted' and 'adaptation' can cover anything from the introduction of new characters (like the rustic lovers in *The Recruiting Officer*) to a complete reversal of the writer's meaning (as in what they call *The Hero of the Western Word*).

You'd treat Shakespeare quite differently from Synge or Farquhar?

Oh yes, completely. In Shakespeare, the original is worth keeping, as in a museum. Of course, you can't play him word for word. This is 1956, and his experience was different—he couldn't do things we can. He never flew in the air. But if I were putting him on today, it is only small changes I would have to make in the production, changes of emphasis.

You see no point in trying, within limits, to give an idea of what the original production was like?

Oh, that is ridiculous. Absolutely childish. How can you? And if you could, do you know what would happen? The audience

would laugh. Everything was so different. People *moved* differently. It would be like an old film. You know what it is like to see a film of fifty years ago. Think how the banquet scene in *Macbeth* would be, with the people all eating with their hands. And he made grotesque gestures of chewing and throwing bones over his shoulders. And at that moment, while he was making his parody movements and while we both laughing, he seemed to have come alive for the first time in the whole conversation.

Soon after that it came to an end. He had been ill. He was living in the country and coming to Berlin only for a few hours each day. I went away feeling disappointed. He had shown nothing of himself—but I don't think he had hidden anything of himself either. It would have been more pleasant to think that he had, that the old Brecht was still alive behind the dead mask of faith. But could it have been a mask? He had been lively enough in touching on technical questions of production, but almost everything else he'd said led back either to his own theories of Epic Theatre or to Marx. The pious profession of faith in 'fifty years from now' is hard to reconcile with the mockery and the bawdy of his earlier plays and lyrics, but it is quite at one with the tone of the liturgical *Hymn to Communism* in *Die Mutter*, an adaptation of Gorki's novel as a play. The Brecht of the *Dreigroschenoper* and *Mahagonny* was dead long before Brecht died on August 14.

But that is no reason for accepting Dr Herbert Luthy's explanation of the change: that attracted not so much by the creed as by the discipline of Communism, he made a conscious effort to extinguish his own personality. In *Leben des Galilei*, Brecht makes Galileo quote the line 'If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out', but only to add ambiguously: 'Whoever wrote that knows more about comfort than I do'. It may be that asceticism is the most comfortable state of all for the connoisseur, and Brecht had been very offended for a very long time by what he saw of society, but he was far too concerned about seeing it to indulge in a discipline that would lead to blindness. Say rather that he lost the power to focus on what was immediately around him and suffered at the end from a political hypermetropia, which allowed him to believe in the future that Communism promised. It was a leap to faith, but it didn't involve a change of direction: the things the Party promised to change were the things he had always attacked, without ever having the effect he wanted. His whole theory of Epic Theatre is designed to aim productions at the intellect of the audiences for the sake of influencing them, and the attraction of the Party was not its discipline, but its appearance of having the power to effect change.

Nor is there any such complete break as Dr Luthy sees between his first plays and his last. In spite of all the differences, *Mutter Courage* has its roots in the preoccupations of *Trommeln in der Nacht* and the *Dreigroschenoper*,—with war and with trading. And there is the same breadth of sympathy and the same humane anger against every kind of victimization. These are present even in *Die Massnahme*. The sweating coolies are brought in only to prove a point, but the sympathy for them is not perfunctory. If Brecht accepted the discipline of Communism, it was only because he saw no other way of helping to change the world, and if the irony which was the strength of his early plays had grown weaker by the time he came to write *Mutter Courage*—which has other strengths—and faded out altogether before the end, it didn't collapse until after he had begun to doubt the value of doubt. So it may not be irrelevant to end this account of the man of faith that Brecht had grown into by quoting from the ironical ending to his *Hymn to Doubt*:

There are uncritical people, who never doubt
 And there are scrupulous people, who never take action.
 They doubt, not to make their minds up, but
 To avoid having to decide. Their heads
 They use only to shake. Apprehensively
 They warn passengers on sinking ships about water.
 With the murderer's axe raised above their heads,
 They ask themselves whether he isn't human too.
 And with the mumbled observation
 That the question is still open, they climb into bed.
 Vacillation is their profession.
 Their motto is: judgement suspended.

Be careful when you praise doubt
 Not to praise
 The doubt which is despair.

What use is the capacity to doubt
 To the man who can't decide?
 You can make mistakes
 By acting with too little thought
 But the mistake in time of danger
 Is to go on thinking too long.

A Conversation in Ebury Street



Looking back, I wonder a little at the impertinence which led me, as a young man, to write to any author I particularly wished to meet, informing him of my deep admiration for his work, and at the same time cadging an invitation to his house on the strength of a promise to write an article about him in 'one of the papers'. The article's destination had necessarily to be left vague, since nobody had commissioned me to undertake the assignment, which in fact I invented to suit my artful purpose. I wonder, too, at the gullibility of some of my victims. Either they were flattered by the praise I included in my letter to them, or were uncommonly kind people who knew that whatever one wrote about them was likely to appeal to one editor or another, and could therefore be depended upon to put a few guineas into a struggling journalist's pocket.

I doubt, however, if I bored to excess the authors who fell into my little trap, for to listen to praise of one's work—no matter from whom it comes—is seldom an entirely dull experience, and the praise I offered was genuine enough. Indeed it may even have been a pity that as the years passed I lost my boldness—my audacity if you prefer it—and gradually attained a certain reticence in the presence of my elders and betters.

My lion-hunting expeditions were in full swing when George Moore received me at 121 Ebury Street. He was trapped at the end of a dizzy week which had included sessions with John Galsworthy and Hugh Walpole; trapped, I may say, with no great difficulty. 'I liked,' were his first words to me, 'the tone of your letter, Mr Stokes'; an understandable remark, perhaps, seeing that in it I had expressed the opinion that he was the greatest novelist alive; an opinion I had in honesty withheld from Mr Galsworthy and Mr Walpole. From his armchair in a room at the top of the narrow little house with the bow-windows that he and Edmund Gosse had

made famous, Mr Moore observed me with a calm stare; a down-right old gentleman, he seemed, with hair like soft white thistle-down, and the pink complexion of a healthy infant.

'Have you come to talk to me about my books?' he said, at the same time pouring me out a cup of tea on the low table in front of him. 'I have written a great number of books. Too many, I sometimes think. Now I am left with the task of correcting some of them.'

'They don't satisfy you?' I said.

He shook his head: 'I read them through and come across a word here, and another there, that I want out. It is like weeding a lawn of daisies. "Ah, another daisy," I exclaim, "*and another!*" They all have to come out until the book is as perfect as I can make it.' He took up from the table a copy of *The Brook Kerith*, the pages of which he proceeded to turn lovingly, pausing as he did so to admire the set of the type, and reading aloud at random a sentence, sometimes one that he confessed with mild astonishment he had no recollection whatever of having written. 'It's good, hard prose,' he said, with obvious satisfaction. 'Easy to read. Only soft prose is difficult.'

'So at last,' I said, 'you have a perfect book. No more weeding is needed.' The ghost of a smile preceded his reply: 'There *is* one daisy in it, I believe. A friend has told me of it. But I doubt if I shall go all through the book again—just for the sake of one daisy.'

I asked Mr Moore if he were writing anything new, and he said, calmly, that he was. 'With a modern setting?' I said. The idea appeared to distress him, and on a note of impatience he told me that he was unable to write of the present, mechanical age, nor had he any wish to. 'But I can write stories of the past,' he added. 'I can write about a man making things with his hands—man has always done that and always will—but I cannot write about a man driving a motor car along a horrible tarred road.'

'Then your new book is set in the past?'

'In Ancient Greece,' said Mr Moore. 'Men and women were the same then as they are now. I don't know, no one does, exactly what attitude the Ancient Greeks assumed in prayer. But I feel certain that they did not kneel down. In my book I have made them pray standing up. Kneeling is such a very ignominious position, like a camel's; and the Greeks, I'm sure, never bent their knees to anyone.'

'But the present generation,' I said, hoping to entice from him a reply that would catch the eye of any editor to whom I submitted an account of my conversation with Mr Moore, 'has its good points, even its good writers?' A thoughtful silence ensued, before he grudgingly replied: 'I do not read modern novels as a rule. But there

is David Garnett's *Mariner's Return* [he meant *Sailor's Return*] and if I had the time, which I have not, I would help Sheila Kaye-Smith to rewrite her novel, *Green Apple Harvest*. In that book she has a story to tell and some good characters. But she should rewrite it.'

To break another silence which threatened to continue while Mr Moore read—to himself this time—a little more of *The Brook Kerith*, I mentioned the theatre, and the fact that he had not been well enough to attend any performance of his recently produced play about Shakespeare, *The Making of an Immortal*. 'Had I been in good health,' he said, 'I should not have gone to see the play. When I write a play I see how it should act. I know just how it should look on the stage. But I don't want to see a play of mine produced by somebody else. They tell me, though, that my play was beautifully acted. And I noticed some of the critics praised the boy who played Juliet, just as it used to be in Shakespeare's day. Now if I were a theatrical manager I should put on Shakespeare's tragedy with this boy in the part. The novelty of the thing would fill the house. I have even suggested this. But nothing has come of the idea, I notice.'

Thereupon Mr Moore returned to his perusal of *The Brook Kerith*, which for some reason I could not fathom seemed positively to fascinate him. I had a feeling that unless I managed by some means to draw his attention away from the book, I might very well find myself forgotten altogether. It was not, I felt, that my host meant in any way to appear discourteous, merely that for the time being his absorption in the pages as he turned them was too concentrated for him to give a thought to anything else. It struck me, however, that he could have chosen a more fortunate occasion for his occupation.

'Mr Moore,' I said, rather loudly, 'would you have any objection to my asking you a few personal questions? Your views on one or two things? Dogs, for instance. . . .'

'What about dogs?' said Mr Moore, a trifle sharply, but without raising his eyes from the page. 'Is it true that you have an aversion to all dogs?' I said. 'In an essay of his that I read somewhere, St John Ervine insists that this is so. Has a dog at some time done you harm?' Mr Moore stared hard at me, and I wondered if I had said the wrong thing. 'I do not dislike dogs,' he said firmly, 'and I cannot think why Mr Ervine ever said that I did.' After a thoughtful pause, he added: 'Ervine writes quite nicely, but he makes stupid mistakes, which annoy me. If a dog shits'—he emphasized the word—'on my doorstep, and they do, of course I don't like it. Would Mr Ervine? No; it is quite absurd to say that I dislike dogs.'

From the subject of dogs I passed quickly to the subject of Bernard

Shaw. It had recently been reported in a newspaper: 'Mr Moore makes it an inviolable rule never to discuss "his very good friend".' I knew myself to be on dangerous ground here, but the risk seemed worth the possibility of arousing Mr Moore's interest, and happily I did not draw a blank by calling his attention to the statement. Indeed he was more than ready for it, to judge by the liveliness of his exclamation, as at last he let the book he was holding rest on his knee.

'Why,' he asked, exasperated, 'is Shaw such a vulgarian? Can you tell me that? I really cannot understand it. This everlasting pose of his as the Great Man. How sick one gets of it. It's not as if it were an original pose, either; he merely borrowed it from Whistler.' Mr Moore moved a hand impatiently: 'Even when the man changes his lodgings the whole world is informed of the fact. Shaw expects fire-work displays to celebrate it, no doubt. These shouts of his about his own greatness are like, are like . . . like a red herring dragged through the streets for the crowd to follow after. Besides, he's not a great man at all. I can't sit through his plays. *Candida* made me sick.' I mentioned that Shaw had once considered the idea of writing a new play round the character of Hamlet. To which Mr Moore scathingly replied: 'But the fellow *can't* write about the past.'

In some desperation, since obviously Mr Moore was plagued by his anxiety to search for whatever it was he hoped to find in the pages of *The Brook Kerith*, I asked him the first, I'm afraid very banal, question that came into my head. 'If you had an opportunity of meeting any two authors now dead, which two would you choose?' Without any hesitation he replied: 'Shelley and Turgenev. I met the Russian once, but only for a short time.' He then invited me, as he got slowly up out of his armchair, to follow him down to a room on the ground floor—for what particular purpose I have now forgotten; unless it was to show me a Manet that hung on the wall, or a live canary in its cage that was in full song. But I do remember that as we descended the steep little stairs, he remarked, as it were out of the blue: 'I am about to read James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which I have had great difficulty in getting hold of. I don't know how I shall like it.'

We entered the room, and among the books littering the table I noticed at once a slim, handsomely bound volume containing photographs that a celebrated photographer had taken of the late Isadora Duncan. The dancer had been a friend of mine, and picking up the book, I examined it with interest. 'What is that?' said Mr Moore, holding out his hand. He took the book from me, and glanced casually at a picture of Miss Duncan, scantily clad and in a

somewhat provocative pose. A frown passed across his babyish features: 'Someone must have sent it to me,' he said. 'I don't know why. Naked women exposing themselves! I hate all that sort of thing'; and with some violence he threw the book into the wastepaper basket. I had half a mind, since I would dearly have liked to possess the book, to ask him for it. But my courage failed me. 'Sit down,' said Mr Moore, himself taking a place at the table; and as I did so I saw that he was once more gazing, as if mesmerized, at the pages of *The Brook Kerith*. By this time my patience was wearing a little thin. It was useless to pretend that I hadn't found the interview something of a disappointment. I could not persuade myself that no matter how fascinating Mr Moore found the contemplation of his own, admittedly brilliant, novel, he might nevertheless have foregone the pleasure it afforded him until after my departure. 'As you are not intending to look for that daisy your friend told you of,' I said, 'and will leave the book as it is, what can it be, I wonder, that you are now looking for?'

The expression on Mr Moore's face was that of one who had at last been asked a question he was glad to answer. 'But I am *not*,' he said, 'leaving this book as it is. No, I am not yet satisfied with it. A certain amount of work has still to be done before the next edition is printed.' He pushed the book, open flat at somewhere about the middle, over to me, saying as he did so: 'All the pages must be like those two. In every case the text must *entirely* fill the page. I don't want it broken up by ugly white channels wherever a line of type is too short to reach the margin.' I saw his point, though I thought it rather pointless. And I asked him what he intended to do in order to give each page the solid and compact appearance he sought. 'I shall add words wherever they are needed,' he said.

I should have left it at that, of course. What business was it of mine if Mr Moore chose to alter his impeccable style, adding a few words here and a few more there—words he had not in the first place thought necessary—simply for the sake of entirely filling his page? But unwisely I expressed a very genuine surprise that he should put the appearance of his page before the rhythm of his prose; a surprise that Mr Moore did not condescend to take account of. 'Well,' he said, 'we must be on our way, I suppose'; and with a further remark, for politeness sake, relative to the unpredictable state of the English climate, he showed me the door.

It may well have been the chagrin I felt at being thus gently dismissed from his presence that caused me mischievously to repeat, in a letter to Shaw some days later, some of the things Moore had said of him. To which Shaw, that lovable man who never failed to

answer personally letters addressed to him by even the least of his acquaintances, replied: 'I doubt if George thinks me excessively vulgar. A man without vulgarity could no more exist than a man without bowels. I made my change of address known to save George from sending letters to the wrong address. He cannot seriously complain of this. I talk about myself because I have a good deal of interesting and significant experience which is useful evidence. I ought to do more in this way; but I am a little tired of myself and apt to shirk my social duties. Everybody's plays make somebody sick sometimes. He must put up with it if he cannot resist reading mine. The sickness is probably salutary.'

A Writer's Prospect—IV



A nation gets the literature it deserves; so the old maxim may be said to warn us, and within limits it is true. Now and again, certain specific handicaps may retard literature for a while, and cause it to drop behind the other arts; no one will say, for instance, that the English did not 'deserve' a good literature in the sixteenth century, but—until the last decade—they did not get one. They got (and therefore must have deserved, if the adage is true) remarkably good painting, architecture, and music, so it is reasonable to suppose that they had created a civilization that also merited good poetry and fiction. The fact that these did not materialize is therefore due, probably, to technical reasons that can be stated in the terminology of literary history: the language was not ready to take the weight; the forms of mediaeval literature had worn out, and it took time to replace them; technical innovation was the great need, but the inventiveness of the race was being piped off to meet the even more urgent needs of theology. But what is to be the excuse for the twentieth century, if we of the second half let down the high standard of the first half?

All the threats to literature that writers so plaintively indicate—mass communications, mechanical entertainment, the day of the ad. man—have been with us a long time. Television, the bogey easily evoked to make your flesh creep, brings in nothing new; the cinema ended the novelist's monopoly of popular entertainment thirty years ago, and who cares? Is it any more difficult to write a good novel now that it was in 1920? Once it became possible to use the moving image as a means of communication, the thing was naturally taken up; men who in an earlier age would have been authors became filmmakers, and people who would have been great novel-readers, getting through their two or three a week, became filmgoers. And what harm resulted? None, that I can see, any more than painting was harmed by the invention of photography. If anything, painting as an art benefited by the development of the camera, which could be

used for the mechanical work of taking likenesses, and set the painter free to work imaginatively. In the same way, if the novelist knows that the appetite for entertainment, for mere diversion, is being served, if not satisfied, by a vast industry devoted to nothing else, that is a burden off his shoulders. In the new world, the book becomes the instrument of a more careful and measured form of communication; less important for diversion, but more than ever vital to the thinking, discussing, and judging mind.

Excuses, then, are out. A writer setting up in business in the 1950's is like a batsman going out to the wicket as fifth or sixth man, to follow a succession of giants who have all made centuries. Because when the inevitable litter has been cleared up and carted away, when the mushroom reputations have withered, the years 1900—1950 are going to be seen as one of the great ages of English literature. Conrad, Henry James, Lawrence, Yeats, Eliot—these alone are enough to be going on with. Towards the end of the period we have marked out, things begin to get rougher, it is true; the volume of rubbish begins to mount, or, it not actually to mount, to be taken more and more seriously; critics plunge wildly and lead their public in search of mares' nests; but we can put that right, if we keep our heads. If it seems, now and then, that the heroic age ended with the death of Yeats in 1939, we need only remember that in the 1940's, when the general level—understandably—fell to its lowest, Mr Eliot wrote and published the *Four Quartets*, a work weighty enough to save the reputation of the entire decade.

How does it feel, then (for I cannot shake free of the cricket metaphor so easily) to have left the pavilion and be walking out to the wicket, under these circumstances?

Speaking for myself, the chief thing I find noticeable is the really extraordinary lack of intelligent *comment* on what is going on. There is plenty of talent about, and a fair amount of encouragement, official and otherwise; but there is hardly any informed appraisal. A lot of words are written, week by week and month by month, about the poems and novels that come out; but examine this mass of comment and you will find, for the most part, that it consists merely of rudimentary attempts to sort writers out into groups to which crude labels can be affixed—'Metropolitan', 'Provincial', and so on. Occasionally a controversy flares up, but it is nearly always about what somebody *said* about contemporary writing rather than the writing itself; it is touched off by the label, the slogan, not by the work the critics are supposed to be describing. For example, Mr Somerset Maugham's letter to a Sunday paper, last Christmas, saying how glad he was that he would be dead and gone

before the new scum, as typified by a certain kind of modern novelist, inherited the earth—it was quite obviously triggered off not by the books in question, but by an article *describing* these books. And Mr Philip Oakes, the author of that article, will, I know, forgive me if I say that he was—to put it mildly—painting in poster colours; making the design large and vivid so as to be seen by people going past at speed. It all gives one a sense of deadness; no artist can make his work as simple and as vivid as a poster; if he tries to, he will produce not art, but advertisement; and so however hard you try to avoid being misunderstood and travestied, you find it useless. The posters are brighter, the slogans can be chanted more loudly.

The fact is that a grip on contemporary literary history is a necessity for anyone wishing to know what can usefully be done *next*. The time has gone by when a writer could just soldier on. Given the initial creative spark, there has to be some idea of the chart we are sailing by. Otherwise we are back in the position Mr Eliot was trying to combat in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*.

'Someone said: "The dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did." Precisely, and they are that which we know.'

Believing this, I naturally find the present state of affairs a strange one. For in spite of the ceaseless torrent of words, the critical task of 'knowing' our great predecessors, a task which is the responsibility equally of those who write and those who comment, is simply neglected. Thirty years ago there was something called 'modern' poetry. Go back to the *Waste Land*, and, if it is any length of time since you read it, I guarantee that one of the things you will notice is how much more *modern* it is than anything being written now; I mean 'modern' in the sense that Bauhaus architecture, Cubist painting, etc, are modern. This quality, this modernity, which was supposed to represent the twentieth century and set it apart from the nineteenth, had many absurd features, and the reaction away from it was quite justifiable; but it is becoming obvious by this time that the baby has been emptied away with the bathwater. After all, to write even a pastiche of early Eliot required some verbal disciplines which had not been required by Victorian poetic fashions; to write even in the manner of the forgotten Imagists, like Hulme or F. S. Flint, took some doing; one had to learn techniques which were, at any rate, different from the techniques of, say, William Watson. The hard critical struggle to keep hold of what had been learnt by these early modernists, to see to it that their useful lessons were incorporated in what came after—that was the task for the serious and determined literary intelligence of the time. And what hap-

pened? A few people understood, the rest turned away. In the 'thirties too many turned in the direction of mere sloppiness and laziness; noticing that 'modern' poetry often didn't rhyme or scan, in traditional ways at any rate, people gave up all attempt to make their verse different from prose; take down your Faber Book of Modern Verse, open it at page 325, and read Charles Madge's *Lusty Juventus*. Then reflect that this was thought good enough, not only to be printed, but to be included in an anthology! Mr Madge, now a professor of sociology, might almost make it the theme of a lecture.

Meanwhile, a few poets *had* quietly taken the lessons to heart, and were intent on producing a poetry that, while quite often holding fast to traditional elements in English verse, incorporated what was of their own time also. Looking back, I find this attempt most successfully made by Robert Graves; and, in a more idiosyncratic way, by William Empson. One notices that Mr Tambimuttu, in the editorial of the first number of his new American version of *Poetry London*, says rather sniffily that 'in Britain there are the neo-Empsonians (Empson himself has disowned them) as well as the followers of Robert Graves'. Has he, I wonder, any idea of *why* these two poets command allegiance among their juniors? Does he see, could he possibly see how they appear from the viewpoint of the 1950's—as two poets who were unaffected by the vogue either for sheer maundering, or wild raving in the manner of the 'forties? The young apprentice of seven or eight years ago singled out these two because in them alone (setting aside Mr Eliot as *hors concours*) did he find the realization of what a 'tradition' means.

Here is another hard word. 'Tradition': it is so often taken in a simple-minded sense, to mean that what was good enough for Father is going to be good enough for Us. In this sense, I must think, Mr Philip Larkin was taking it when he wrote, 'As a guiding principle I believe that every poem must be its own sole freshly-created universe, and therefore have no belief in "tradition" or a common myth-kitty.' How one agrees about the myth-kitty, and how one aches for an end to the twaddle about the necessity for a poet to pretend to believe things he doesn't believe, so as to give himself a 'framework of myth' or whatever. But 'tradition' is a pretty big thing not to believe in; it manifests itself in many ways, and one can hardly not believe in *any* of those ways. Mr Larkin's own poems are such superb examples of work with a tradition behind it, felt in the blood rather than held up as a banner, that one is forced to contradict him, to say that, whatever he may protest, he does believe in tradition.

But too many poets, on the other hand, having caught up with the talk about 'tradition', are trying to write traditional verse while

overlooking the fact that *it is a tradition in English poetry to be original*. Their interpretation of 'tradition' has advanced no further, after seventy years, than the 'continuous literary decorum' of Bridges. But a lot of water has run under Bridges since then.

Meanwhile, good criticism is frighteningly rare. Speaking for myself, I have found it impossible to trust to the judgement of the people who, among us, have charge of this important function. So many of the people who make a living, or part of a living, from having their opinions of books printed and circulated, the people whose collective impact constitutes 'literary opinion' do not—to be frank—possess even ordinary competence.

Is it any wonder that one's impulse is just to trust one's own judgement, and let the critics go hang?

But this is dangerous. The critics shouldn't go hang; they should be encouraged to try harder, to read more, and to think instead of going out to parties where they hear the latest epigram that can go into next week's article. And one of the ways in which this could be brought about is a healing of the breach between the general 'literary mind' on the one hand, and the universities on the other. The universities, if they have any function at all, have this one: to train the people who will be the audience for literature in their time. As long ago as *Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927) Mr Graves and Miss Riding were declaring that the contemporary poet wrote mainly for the universities, by which I suppose they meant both people still there and people who had gone down as the finished product.

When I say 'the universities', I mean all of them, and not just Oxford and Cambridge. This is no place to go into the monstrous injustice whereby all but two of the English universities are dubbed 'provincial', but one thing, at least, should be said. University teachers, as a body, are an important part of the intelligentsia of the country. If they are discontented and ill-used, so much the worse for the intelligentsia as a whole, and hence for the community as a whole. Now, bearing in mind that the overwhelming majority of university teachers in this country are 'provincial', i.e. work outside Oxford and Cambridge, I must admit that I do sometimes wonder if we are wise to go on poking so much dreadfully ill-natured fun at them. They take it, of course, with stolid dignity, and never say anything back, and they would not necessarily thank *me* for defending them. But the thing is getting out of hand. To take an example at random, one finds a reviewer in *The Listener*, who is given about a quarter of a page to review David Daiches's *Literary Essays*. This hardly seems too much; one would think he would need all his space for the book; but no, over a third of it goes on stuff like this:

'Scholars (of a sort) keep rolling off the production line until they are two a penny. They in their turn, like good little machine-tools, produce new batches of sub-scholars who ought (but do not) fetch the Biblical price for sparrows. Are not two sold for a farthing? No, in fact they are not; they are sold for roughly £600 — £1,200 a year to provincial universities where (automation run riot) they turn out clutch upon clutch of sub-sub-scholars. They may be recognized by the crinkle in their shoulders—the weight of their learning is too much for them: and more especially the angular non-human jerk of their gait,' etc, etc.

The speaker? Mr Hilary Corke, at that time lecturer in English at Edinburgh University—an institution which, in the general scheme of things, is as 'provincial' as Manchester (unless one happened to be a Scot brought up in Scotland, when it would be metropolitan). I think it a pity that this kind of silly impertinence is so much in vogue that a paper like *The Listener* will accept it in place of honest-to-goodness reviewing. Mr Corke's defence would probably be that, though compelled by necessity to earn his living as a university teacher of English literature, he is at least innocent of the charge of taking it seriously; there is no crinkle in *his* shoulders, since he has at no time made the slightest contribution to the academic study of English literature—that I am aware of, at any rate.

What I am getting at is that an author, if he is to have any sense of security, must feel at home with his public. And this reminds me to say, in conclusion, that if you must be a man of letters it is not a bad plan to get yourself born in England. There are many snags about writing primarily for English people; lack of a critically intelligent public one of them; but, after all, an author needs some things even more than he needs intelligent criticism, and one of them is a liberal atmosphere. The freedom of the English writer from bullying officials and hysterical witch-hunters, the generally good-tempered attitude of people towards him, is worth a cart-load of critics. Examples of this good temper abound; there is *nothing* this people will not forgive. Let me end as I have gone on, in thoroughly bad taste. At the end of the 'thirties, when this country was about to be attacked with a strong chance of being defeated, our two most gifted young writers left our shores and became citizens of another country. Good luck to them. But if they had been Frenchmen or Italians, would they be honoured guests today in their rejected country? Would one of them occupy a traditionally honoured academic chair? I doubt it. Here is something that we might well boast about; as long as the innate English gentleness of spirit is still so much in evidence, it is at least possible to build a future for literature.

Correspondence



Sir,

Mr Colin Wilson in his 'Writer's Prospect' shows a *concern* for the general literary situation which is refreshing, but his diagnosis is so incomplete that his concern can hardly be of much practical use. He betrays his own cause in his first sentence, when he speaks about 'Western Europe' and 'Western European literature' as if these were terms that needed no comment; as if it was possible, far less desirable, to cut off the western half of Europe from its eastern half, and as if nothing had been written on the far side of Bonn and Venice since Dostoevsky.

It is disappointing to see in Mr Wilson merely another Western European Provincial, dressed in a new suit of clothes but clinging resolutely to the same old threadbare ragbag of traditions. To offer us a new set of reverences, with Shaw and Wells in place of Eliot and Pound, may well produce a temporary enlivening effect, but the heart of our problem will remain untouched so long as we continue to try to perpetuate ourselves through this ceaseless cultural incest. Western European literature is starving itself because it has become afraid to go beyond its own boundaries for nourishment. Dread of political stigma compels us to remain ignorant or ignorantly contemptuous of literary values embedded in cultures opposed to our own. This ignorance is so shocking, and in the end will be so bad for our culture, that one must utter a protest when Mr Wilson says we can count on very few fingers 'the number of writers of the last thirty years who considered themselves actively involved in the destiny of their times', without mentioning the fact that if this is true it is because Western European writers had already severed most of their life-giving connections with the rest of the world, and had become enamoured of their own decline. There were plenty of writers, some of them very great and very human writers, who were 'actively involved in the destiny of their

times', and from whom much might have been learned, by both novelists and poets: let me mention no more than Gorky, Mayakovsky, Sholokhov. Does Mr Wilson think that these writers belonged to a different race—or even to an incompatibly different culture? Is he aware of the fact that it is the USSR, and not Britain, which shares his high opinion of Shaw and his low opinion of 'Freud, Jung, Bergson, and Donne'? What is his view of another fact: that his 'sense of reality', search for pattern, 'diagnosis of the age', and necessity of affirmation, are all vigorously recommended by Soviet critics, and can indeed be found (allowing for natural shortcomings) *at the present time* by anyone who reads Russian or who even takes the trouble to look at translations of post-war Russian books. Leonov, Panova, Granin, Chukovsky, Ehrenburg: have they *no* relevance, Mr Wilson? *Can* we do without them—always?

I mention Russian literature not politically but because it is a foreign literature with which I have some familiarity and whose traditions and characteristics I respect. The point I want to make is simply that writers cannot afford at this time of day to dig themselves in within this little promontory of Eurasia and go on counting their treasures. We have all been doing that too long; the very coins will not clink as blithely as they did. I fully sympathize with Mr Wilson in his desire to revitalize the literary body, but I would suggest that his fashion of criticizing the 'writer's prospect' is like a man covering one eye with his hand and complaining of the wrongness of the scene.

Rutherglen, Glasgow

Edwin Morgan

Sir,

Mr Colin Wilson begins his admirable and lively article 'The Writer's Prospect' with the premise, 'the decay of Western Culture has one feature that could not be claimed for any previous civilization: the end may be so cataclysmic as to leave no trace of our achievements'. He seems to imply that this situation gives the writer responsibilities which are new in our time, or at least extra heavy.

But did not the whole of Western Culture, as we know it, grow up in the expectation of a cataclysmic end? Far from being new, the idea has been one of the conditioning factors of our civilization. Surely it was impossible to be 'a man of one's time', at least until the eighteenth century, without being affected by the belief in the end of the world. Today there are differences certainly, but the *situation*

is not new. In the eighteenth century this root belief (to speak generally) was replaced by the concept of Progress. This opened the way for Karl Marx and the theory of Historical Necessity. The Heavens of both faiths are pitched vaguely in the future. The latest by-product of the faith in Progress has sharply diminished the probability of a terrestrial one. I have seen no attempt to readjust the concept of World Socialism in the light of this irony. Anyway, it does seem that the possibility of obliteration was only allowed to go to the back of some men's minds for a mere two hundred years.

I labour this, obvious as it may be, because Mr Wilson's reasoning is here of the sort that often leads to a call for a 'special' type of action from writers. Any such cry seems to me equivalent to saying, 'When in doubt try something new.' But it is never the 'old' ways that fail us. It is our hearts that fail. Novelty, for its own sake, is the ever-popular means of escape. And sure enough Mr Wilson gives the introduction to his call: 'In what way can a writer provide the diagnosis of his age?' May I suggest that this is a fruitless, perhaps pernicious, question. Should it not be: 'How can a writer provide the diagnosis of himself?' So that he may equip himself for his job, the combat of chaos or, better perhaps, the examination of it. He must, of course, be relevant to his age, 'concerned' with it, and indeed it is just by asking the questions 'What am I?' and then 'Why?' that he becomes a (private) revolutionary, and thus, in Mr Wilson's apt category, 'an outsider'. The great danger of a conscious search after contemporaneity is that it can lead to the questions 'What are they doing?' and then 'How dare they?' This is to drown an irritating noise by making a louder one; to become internally deaf.

S.W.7

Pat Kavanagh

Sir,

Mr Colin Wilson is both lucid and courageous. But the problem of creativity in literature may not be answerable to historical logic at all. There is always the chance for example that the wind bloweth where it listeth. Who is going to affirm that the emergence of another Shakespeare upon the literary scene today is an impossibility? All we can possibly affirm is that, if he did appear, he might be ignored or even derided, unable to compete for the favours of *avant-garde* with that fashionable young French novelist, who, as Philip Toynbee told us recently in the *Observer*, is emphatic that he writes about Nothing. Shakespeare emphatically wrote about Something. The vacuum in which a writer functions today would, as we all know,

yield instantly to the inspiration of a William Blake. No one is going to maintain that Blake was the product of favourable literary conditions. What Mr Wilson is really saying is that current thought trends are unfavourable both to vision and creativity; and what I feel inclined myself to say is that the really paralysing factor is the absence of an accepted background. Men who believe in God, or in the gods, start from something. Men who believe in a code of ethics, or a mode of life; ritualists who hand over part of their indecision to Confucius, or mystics who hand over all their indecision to Tao, are likely to have far more creative energy at their disposal than those who start, as so many seem to start today, sans religion, sans philosophy, sans ethics, sans morals, and often — alas — sans talent.

Dublin

Monk Gibbon

Sir,

In connection with Mr George Sims's article on *Leonard Smithers* in the September number of *The London Magazine*, it is interesting to note that Smithers has the honour of having published the first English translations of Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* and *La Chartreuse de Parme*. Both translations were by E. P. Robins and were published in conjunction with George H. Richmond and Sons of New York, *La Chartreuse* . . . in 1895 (three vols.) *Le Rouge* . . . (two vols.) in 1898. The editions were of 750 copies of the former and 205 of the latter; each was illustrated with etchings and well produced. I think this is a further evidence of the courage and percipience of Smithers as a publisher; the Stendhal boom had by no means started in the nineties in Britain. I should like to know more about the translator, E. P. Robins.

The University, Reading

B. C. J. G. Knight

Book Reviews



THE SHOCK OF RECOGNITION. Edited by Edmund Wilson. (W. H. Allen. 45s.)

'Who reads an American book?' asked Sidney Smith. The jeer has boomeranged, as every publisher homeward-bound from New York with a bagful of could-be *Gone With the Winds* can tell you. The prevailing wind that drew Eliot to England has shifted and blows the other way; and the solid Englishman, no longer sure of being at the centre where the movements are made and broken, has become the adaptable *Graeculus* showing the Senator round the ruins with his cosmopolitan chatter. In ten years he has learnt to drink coffee, cook foreign food at home, holiday abroad and applaud bullfights. Faulkner, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Carson McCullers and Nathaniel West are on the shelves. Yet the famous insularity is still entrenched in one field of literature. Has he read Hawthorne, or Emerson, or Thoreau? Does he know Poe's criticism, as the French do? Does he realize that Mark Twain is more than a humorous boys' story writer? Has he given Whitman a fair hearing? Who reads a nineteenth-century American book! Re-phrased, the question flies straight through the chink in the well-read Englishman's panoply.

For this reason Mr Wilson's collection, which he subtitles 'The Development of Literature in the United States Recorded by the Men Who Made it', is a very desirable import; though why it should have taken thirteen years to reach an English publisher I cannot imagine. Every anthology has its criteria of choice to prevent it from being endless. Mr Wilson's are: no general discussions on principles and tendencies, only pieces which deal with particular writers; nothing more recent than 1922; nothing by professional critics who are not also creatively mixed up in making literature; no extracts or omissions; and no bar against non-Americans with something valuable to say. The material, with the editor's short and intelligent

introductions, make 1,300 pages, very few of which are boring.

The writers in the new continent divided from the first into two groups: those who looked inwards for inspiration, and those who looked back to the parent culture. In mental terms one can call them frontiersmen and expatriates, and until quite recently the distinction was still visible. During the last century nearly all the great American books came from the expatriate camp. Even Fenimore Cooper, despite his hundred per cent American hinterlands, was in style and attitude only another Walter Scott. As his frontier was moving westward revealing exotic material, the American writer of those times continued to look fixedly eastward. At this distance it seems a ridiculously false position, like that of a man with one foot on the bank and one in a moving boat. Melville could have visited Red Indians instead of Polynesians, but to a New Englander in the grip of our literary tradition romantic travel inevitably meant a voyage. In 1858 Hawthorne could confess, 'No author can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity.' This embarrassment at imaginary poverty, the feeling that, in Henry James's phrase, 'it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature' continued to haunt American authors even after their books had been acclaimed in Europe. What was needed from Europe to establish American literary confidence was acknowledgement not that a book was good, but that it could not possibly have been written by anyone but an American.

Mark Twain is well known as the first prose writer to strike authentic American cadences. Yet American style, as a sustained art, begins rather with Stephen Crane. Twain was irreverent of tradition, but his prose is more imitative than Crane's in the sense that it follows doggedly the shape and run of American talk. But in a passage of Crane's like the following, the flat New England voice is only just felt as one ingredient in a style that is entirely national, a style that looks forward to Hemingway and backwards to nobody. (H. G. Wells saw this. Crane, he said, 'began stark . . . as though he came into the world of letters without a predecessor.')

None of them knew the colour of the sky. Their eyes glanced level, and were fastened upon the waves that swept toward them. These waves were of the hue of slate, save for the tops, which were of foaming white, and all of the men knew the colour of the sea. The horizon narrowed and widened, and dipped and rose, and at all times its edge was jagged with waves that seemed thrust up in points like rocks.

'Before we have an American literature, we must have an American criticism,' Lowell said, getting the thing the wrong way round. Writers do not wait about, saying 'Give us the rules, and we will finish the job.' Moreover, although critical standards are theoretically not dependent on age and country, the critic who arrives before there is a body of books in his country worth criticizing can die of intellectual starvation beside his own crammed bookcase. That was the case with Poe. Denied good red stimulating American blood, his voice rose often to a mosquito-like fury. With his habit of enunciating abstract laws, his wide European reading, his poisonous stings in the tradition of the *Quarterly* ('The eight lines are entitled a song and we could very much like to hear Mr Channing sing it'), his rapier practice on the dummies who were all that the times had to offer him, he must have seemed to some of his struggling contemporaries the image of the inhibiting father-figure of the Old World. Poe was dazzling but unhelpful, unconnected. He still seems so. Few specks of fertilizing dust have blown from his works into the imaginations of American writers.

The fruity bulk of the collection is a series of essays by American writers on American writers: Poe (at his best with an equal) on Hawthorne, Emerson on Thoreau, Melville and Henry James on Hawthorne, John Jay Chapman on Emerson, Howells on Mark Twain, Mencken on Dreiser. All, except Poe's, are marked by a relaxed good sense and the affectionate sympathy which is patriotism's rare aid to critical eyesight. Some are partly biographical. Howells' *My Mark Twain* contains a description of Clemens' *gaffe* at the Whittier dinner when, in front of the revered trio themselves, he waggishly conjured up the vision of three dead-beat hobos arriving at a Californian mining camp and imposing themselves on the inmates as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes. A frozen silence fell on the company, 'broken only by the hysterical and bloodcurdling laughter of a single guest'. It was a symbolic moment: the barbarian from the West capering before the sacred idols of the Eastern seaboard while the idols dozed on, 'Longfellow sitting upright and regarding the humourist with an air of pensive puzzle', 'Emerson holding his elbows and listening with a sort of Jovian oblivion'.

Emerson, Poe, Whitman, Twain, William James, Dreiser—how many of the Americans had their first vogue on this side of the Atlantic: now they make an unfashionable list over here. Yet presented in perspective in a single well-chosen and edited book, they take on a renewed attractiveness. One feels 'the shock of recognition' for their genius—and for their problems. A national literature is always

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struggling somewhere to grow from transplanted English—in the West Indies now, for instance. Besides, as our future becomes increasingly identified with the United States their past also begins to belong to us, Davy Crockett and all. English literary talent could become (as Henry James mournfully diagnosed Thoreau) worse than provincial, parochial. It needs every possible stimulus to prevent it from going quaintly Alexandrian. To grapple with American civilization—not in the brittle, set manner of Waugh but in the tough, absorptive way of Auden—is a healthy exercise which Mr Wilson's book may induce some people to take up.

JAMES MICHIE

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FRENCH POETS by Geoffrey Brereton.
(Methuen. 25s.)

The English reader anxious to explore French poetry, if he seeks guidance from academic critics, is too often treated as a candidate for initiation and confronted with a horrid complication of technical rules and a welter of theories and classifications. If he turns to the anthologies compiled in yesterday's taste, he finds these overweighted with the more rhetorical and sentimental verse of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, recent French criticism quite understandably shows a change of emphasis, a preference for the neglected or newly-discovered 'metaphysical' and 'baroque' poets of the early seventeenth century and for esoteric poets such as Scève and Nerval. Thierry Maulnier's critical anthology, for instance, may well disconcert the novice brought up to assume that Victor Hugo, alas, was the greatest of French poets.

In this dilemma Dr Brereton's excellent book is particularly welcome. He is a stimulating as well as reliable guide. He approaches French poetry not as an arduous mystery but as something that the 'modern reader of ordinary sensibility', given a reasonable acquaintance with the language and some understanding of the French background and temperament, can enjoy. The rules, for the most part, are put off for another day. As for the theories and classifications, he knows them all but does not give them priority. His aim is the communication of enjoyment, and he attains it fully.

The title of his book indicates its intention, if not its comprehensive scope. It is not, primarily, a critical analysis nor a history of French poetry, but a series of studies of individual poets—from which, as he points out, a general picture does emerge. He keeps theorizing to a minimum; poetry is Villon, Ronsard, Racine and the

Two in Harmony...



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rest; he will not consider it in a vacuum, as a 'parentless product'. So he provides a brief biographical sketch of each poet, with the essential facts and dates, and then turns to a study of the poetry, illustrated with quotations; and from the interplay of biography and criticism a vivid picture of the poetic personality emerges. The method is particularly valuable at this, the introductory stage, provided that (as here) the critic avoids certain pitfalls, such as irrelevance and sentimentality and a mechanical approach to the life-art relation. Dr Brereton steers clear of all these; he has an unerring eye for the essential and is as acute in his judgement of men as of books; so that in these brief sketches he convincingly conveys the essence of his subject.

His breadth of sympathy is remarkable. He could never be suspected of paying lip-service to established reputations or of following fashions; his approach to each poet is fresh and personal. He is aware of the latest discoveries and trends, and can appreciate Scève and Sponde as well as Corbière and Laforgue, and the significant contemporary names, and yet does justice to Lamartine and Musset. The only writer he really jibs at is that monstrous egoist, Hugo: and I, for one, cannot help agreeing.

He is rightly suspicious of categories, except the broadest, realizing both their artificiality and the predilection of French critics for them. Indeed he is shrewdly ironical at the expense both of yesterday's critics who would leave out an author because they didn't know where to 'place' him, and today's who formulate new categories into which to fit difficult cases.

His fresh, unconventional approach is reflected in his style; he gives you the key to a writer not in clichés but in fresh-minted, witty phrases and illuminating images. He has the happiest epithets: Marot's 'sly, light-fingered manner', D'Aubigné, 'this iron-principled and tumultuous man', Racine's 'lucid, wiry style'. Occasionally he expands into an ironic flourish, as when, after describing Verlaine's 'feathery' phase, he says a little later: 'By this time Verlaine had disintegrated, and what flies about us as we progress through his increasingly fluffed-out verse is not feathers but kapok'; or when he associates the fluidity of Chénier's verse with 'the flowing waistless gowns worn by women at the period of the Revolution'. But he rarely overdoes these sallies; the general texture of the book is soberer, yet always vigorous and pithy. His quotations are apt, if strictly rationed; I particularly enjoy his juxtaposition of contrasting expressions of the same theme or mood by the most diverse poets: Hugo and Ronsard, Chénier and Lorca, Malherbe and Shelley, Baudelaire and Marvell. It is a fascinating and fruitful game. (My own



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contribution would be a parallel between Edward Thomas's
 There's nothing like the sun till we are dead
 and Ronsard's

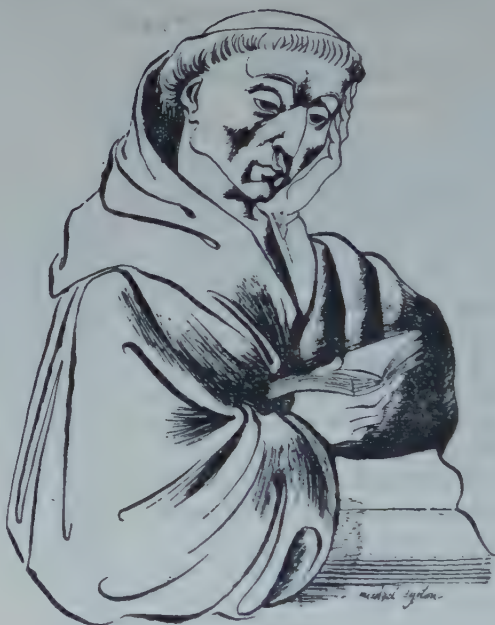
Car il n'est rien si beau que de voir la lumière
 De ce commun soleil . . .

(Hymne à la Mort.)

My only real criticism of the book relates to the omissions which his method, perhaps, makes inevitable. The biographico-critical approach needs to be supplemented by the historical to be of the highest value. True, Dr Brereton sketches in as much of the background as space allows, and it is indeed a *tour de force* to have included so much; but it is necessarily telescoped and therefore distorted. For instance, when you jump from La Fontaine to Chénier, from the heyday of Louis XIV to the Revolution, omitting all the changes of social and philosophical outlook and of sensibility that took place meanwhile, it is not enough to sum up that interval by saying: 'There is no reason to suppose that the poets of the eighteenth century had essentially different feelings from the Romantics. They were simply inhibited by technique.' This begs altogether too many questions, including some fundamental ones.

Apart from this, one can differ from Dr Brereton on minor points, and one can wish for more stress on one's own particular favourites; I, for instance, would like wider illustration of the subtlety and variety and vigour of Ronsard's verse, at least one of Louise Labé's sonnets, and more than a passing reference to Saint-Amant and Théophile de Viau. But minor complaints are insignificant compared with the amount of delighted agreement and of grateful surprise. In the difficult field of more modern poetry, for instance, in his assessment and interpretation of Mallarmé and Valéry and his presentation of contemporaries, Dr Brereton has done us the greatest service.

After surveying the infinite variety of French poetry one may perhaps be left wondering whether there is any common factor, anything essentially and specifically French about it? Dr Brereton will not generalize; he leaves us to draw our own conclusions. That he could, if he chose, be a witty and illuminating generalizer is shown by the brief hint dropped in his admirable chapter on Racine (and surely Racine is a test-case for the interpreter of French poetry). Racine's idiom, he says, has a special fascination for the Frenchman because 'it is a delightful and irresistibly flattering idealization of his ordinary speech. So he might talk in dreams, if he were perfectly eloquent and perfectly lucid. (The Englishman, on the contrary, dreams of perfect eloquence allied to perfect intoxi-



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He was able to show that air is necessary to sustain combustion, and has also been credited, but without adequate evidence, with the discovery of gunpowder. He died on the 11th June, 1292, leaving as his contribution to science a way of thought which still persists all over the world. Roger Bacon, Englishman, may justly be described as the first modern scientist.

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cation, that is, freedom from inhibitions.)'

Dr Brereton half promises us, in his Introduction, to follow up this book with a fuller study of the poetry of the last two or three decades. It is heartily to be hoped that he will; and it is equally desirable that he should without delay edit an anthology of French verse from Villon to the present day, so that the English reader may gain a fuller acquaintance with the poets so admirably introduced to him in the present volume.

JEAN STEWART

MARIANNE THORNTON by E. M. Forster. (*Arnold*. 2 *Is.*)

Mr Forster has performed a work of piety and understanding in commemorating the long life history of his great aunt. Marianne Thornton was born in 1797 and died in 1887 when Mr Forster himself was eight years old. He can remember her vividly as she was during the comparatively short period of time in which he knew her personally, and he has succeeded, with the aid of family documents and reminiscences, in recreating her character from her childhood in days that seem so distant until the time of her still vigorous old age.

The book is not only a tender, penetrating and sympathetic exploration of a family relationship, but also a most interesting historical document. It has ceased now, I think, to be fashionable to underrate the Victorians, who, in any case, have usually been their own best critics. Certainly it is unfair to blame them for a smug stability simply because we happen to know that the volcano on which they lived was about to erupt. We often mistake for smugness something that was merely formal and sincere; and, in our own age of instability, are tempted to envy or deplore what we are unable to achieve ourselves. Moreover there is an important sense in which we tend to expect more from life—more security, more pleasure, more satisfaction—than ever did these wealthy, religious and high-minded exemplars of the Victorian middle-class. Here, for instance, is a quotation from Marianne Thornton's father, who is writing to propose marriage to his future wife: 'I will tell you fairly, and thus early that my own views of this life and the happiness of it, even in the best situations, are very moderate, and it is in the pleasing certainty of your being one that will help my everlasting interests, and one whom I may hope to meet in a better world, that I look on you with the most complacency.'

This is a sentence which, as Mr Forster says, 'can be best under-



The first stage of the Kariba hydro-electric scheme will cost about £78 million. When the original contracts were announced, disappointment was felt in this country because the main contract for the civil engineering work, worth about £25 million, had gone to an Italian firm. Consolation, however, may now be derived from the fact that with exception of the transmission lines, all the electrical equipment for this major electrical generation and distribution project will be supplied by Great Britain.

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MILLIONS



This is one of the first two orders for such high voltage switchgear to be received by British firms, and this part of the contract is worth more than £2 million. Metropolitan-Vickers have received the other high voltage switchgear order which is for air-blast circuit breakers for the Snowy Mountains hydro-electric scheme in Australia. For the Kariba project these two A.E.I. companies, which compete one with the other in many spheres, have together received orders worth £4 million.

stood by readers who tolerate an outmoded approach to love'. It is nevertheless sincere. Nor is it just to use the word 'hypocrisy' of the Thorntons, Wilberforces and others who, while agitating with the greatest fervour against slavery abroad, were either indifferent to or approved of what amounted to industrial slavery in their own country. Mr Forster well writes: 'The really bad people, it seems to me, are those who do no good anywhere and help no one either at home or abroad. There are plenty of them about, and when they are clever as well as selfish they often manage to slip through their lives unnoticed, and so escape the censure of historians.'

Mr Forster is the kind of historian who is not in the first place concerned with the awarding of praise or blame. He is always affectionate, shrewd, understanding, and often amused. Is he, perhaps, in this study a trifle too meticulous? Certainly the material is all interesting, but sometimes I felt that there was too much of it, and that the pruning of some details might have strengthened the general effect. Though 'strengthen' is not the word to use, since the effect is not intended to be monumental. The effect is much more like life. There are isolated and clearly remembered scenes, long nagging episodes, curious details which either in themselves or in the language are dream-like, half familiar and half remote; there are settings, among which stands in particular the reality or the memory of a great house; there are characters seen with varied degrees of clarity, and perhaps some of the dimmer of these might have been allowed to lapse into oblivion.

The central character is firmly and beautifully presented. 'No weakness, no contempt.' In her paper of wishes for the arrangement of her funeral, Marianne Thornton wrote that she would like to be buried 'under the large spreading tree at which I used to look on Sunday when waiting for the First Service to end that I might go in for the Holy Communion afterwards.' I hope that some such an English Elysium exists and that in a more ample air Marianne Thornton is now reading the words of a great-nephew who writes that 'she and no one else made my career as a writer possible'. She would be, as we all are, glad of this, and she would welcome and applaud his incursion into the world of the dead as Anchises did that of Aeneas.

REX WARNER

TUNES OF GLORY by James Kennaway. (*Putnam. 13s. 6d.*)

ADMIT ONE by Mairi MacInnes. (*Putnam. 13s. 6d.*)

NO GREAT MAGIC by Lalage Pulvertaft. (*Secker and Warburg 12s. 6d.*)

THE PARADISE GARDEN by Michael Swan. (*Hamish Hamilton. 10s. 6d.*)

SHADOW OF AUTHORITY by Robert Waller. (*Jonathan Cape. 13s. 6d.*)

Anatole France once remarked that the best way to test a new novel was to turn to page twenty; if that bore inspection, there was a good chance of the rest proving tolerable. There is no doubt something to be said for this arbitrary method of sampling, particularly with the unpredictable first novel. The more cautious reader may still feel, however, that the opening paragraph provides a more trustworthy guide. There is no excitement quite like that of watching a new writer driving the first stake to a new claim.

Here is Mr Kennaway's opening:

There is a high wall that surrounds Campbell Barracks, and in the winter there is often a layer of crusted snow on top of it. No civilian rightly knows what happens behind that grey wall, but everybody is always curious, and people were more than ever curious one January a year or two ago. . .

It is interesting to observe how many things Mr Kennaway has managed to do with this beautifully casual, even artless-seeming, introduction. First of all, he has aroused a complex mood of curiosity: the reader is not only curious on his own account (the thought has probably flashed through his head that a barracks is rather like a monastery where the normal mode of existence must be quite fabulously unlike his own), but he also knows that characters in the story will have a strong incitement to pry. 'People were more than ever curious. . .' suggests a tight-knit, clannish community, with a nice hint of censoriousness ever ready to come into the open. Finally, scene and place are deftly set at just the right distance. So much is the strength a novelist can draw from true detachment.

But detachment does not—or should not—imply lack of compassion, and it is the maturity of its compassion that lifts *Tunes of Glory* well above most first novels. It is not easy to portray the decline and ruin of a fine soldier without any hint of special pleading, any false sentiment. Mr Kennaway does it by showing his Colonel Jock Sinclair first as a man big enough to grapple with a tragic destiny, and only secondly as one worthy to be pitied. Sinclair is, in fact, the odd man out from every war, the man of sublime courage and self-sacrifice in action, who takes uneasily to the dull-

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ing rigours of peace. He has, however, the regiment, which he regards as if it were his own family (he is widowed and has only a rather aloof, taciturn daughter), an understanding mistress, and above all, the warm, easy comradeship of the mess. It is when the dapper new Colonel arrives to take command over his head that Sinclair begins to go to pieces. He knows that it is unfair, and tries therefore to be more than fair to his opponent: but they cannot, by temperament, be other than the bitterest enemies. That Barrow, the new Colonel, is in his utterly different way as fine a soldier only drives the wound deeper. In the event, it is Barrow who cracks first, and kills himself, leaving Sinclair to advance towards what must seem an even more terrible retribution. It should not be thought from this that Sinclair is some sort of misfitted superman: he is human enough in his vanity and pride. In fact, we are shown him whole, his virtues and failings inextricably mixed, his stoicism that is itself almost a fault; and therefore the tragedy does not seem planned beforehand, but to develop inevitably.

Here is Miss Mairi MacInnes' first paragraph:

'Got a fit of the lonelies,' said Milly, snuggling up. They were two little girls of twelve years old sitting by themselves in an ornate panelled salon sixty feet long. Before them, panels of gleaming mahogany soared to a high cornice below the moulded white and gold ceiling. Trusses of carved fruit tumbled below the panels, and on each panel hung a full-length portrait in oils. . .

The repetition of 'panels' suggests a lack of sureness, a tendency to crowd on detail and generally to overwrite. In fact, *Admit One* is a good deal better than its highly self-conscious opening paragraphs would imply. Miss MacInnes is also concerned with a conflict of characters, in this case between Milly, wayward and intensely feminine, and Katharine, whose coolly analytical mind constantly stands between herself and easy happiness. Sensing each other as rivals at school, yet fascinated by the rift between them, the two girls pursue a roughly parallel course through the war years, each at different times takes the same lover, and each ends in marriage. Nevertheless, *Admit One* is a curiously uncentred book, excellent in particular scenes where the quick flicker of dialogue catches the nerve-ends of incompatible natures, but adding up to no conclusive statement about either Katherine or Milly or the bond between them. Too many episodes arrive without plausible motive: the madness of Milly's father, for example, or the sudden philanthropy of Katharine towards the wretched Gorley family, for which nothing in her character has prepared us. Most first novels are not detached enough. In her fastidious way, Miss MacInnes seems scornful of involvement,

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and treats her theme too much like a rather bizarre jest. One is aware, however, beneath the arbitrary quirks and mannerisms, of a real sharpness of insight and a genuine gift for social comedy.

The comedy of *No Great Magic* is very much in the open-air, and revolves upon several well-worn conventions: the fecklessness of the Irish, the absent-mindedness of professors, the ruthlessness of children and old ladies. A party of English archaeologists arrive to investigate an ancient stone circle in the west of Ireland, and are drawn into the capacious orbit of the local landowners, the Rourke family. The stone circle (Miss Pulvertaft is extremely skilful at working technical detail into her narrative) throws up a number of disconcerting surprises, there are other surprises in the amatory involvements of the digging party, and it is left to the youngest member of the expedition, Jane, to shiver at the gulf between these lively antics, those poor cold bones. The only criticism I would make of this neatly devised entertainment is that Miss Pulvertaft deals too peremptorily with the motives behind her characters' changing attachments: their affairs of heart wear a rather fortuitous air.

The Paradise Garden opens with a Jamesian paragraph in which the main character, Anna Falconer, is brooding over the extreme disagreeableness of her father. It is partly to escape from this arrogant failure that she goes to Florence, where she falls in love with Simone degli Strozzani, son of an impoverished Italian nobleman and an English mother. Simone is, indeed, the perfect aesthete, who at first opens the door for her into a new world of enchantment. With their marriage, however, difficulties soon arise: Anna suffers from a pathological frigidity and is unable to fulfil the physical side of their relationship, while Marcus, Simone's friend, works assiduously to undermine it for his own selfish reasons. When Simone takes a mistress, Anna realizes that she has lost for ever the key to the paradise garden. The real trouble with *The Paradise Garden* is Anna herself: she is too pale and frustrated a creature to engage much of the reader's sympathy, and therefore the presumed point of this little fable never really strikes home.

Shadow of Authority is a fantasy set in the not-too-distant future, in which the paternalistic Social State has set up a National Publishing Authority to exert a virtual monopoly over all new publications. Within the labyrinthine bowels of this overfed organization, the heads of departments indulge in various plots and intrigues to increase their own prestige, and one luckless poet, Ronald Hope, is first drawn into the toils and then destroyed. Unfortunately, in setting out to satirize the excesses of bureaucracy gone mad, Mr Waller has plumped for a style all too reminiscent of official

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minutes. The fun is slowly extinguished in a morass of undistinguished detail, and the satire ends in an owlish stare.

ERIK DE MAUNY

EDWARD II. Edited by H. B. Charlton and R. D. Waller, revised by F. N. Lees. (*Methuen*. 18s.)

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER by William W. Appleton. (*George Allen and Unwin*. 12s. 6d.)

All the best 'Elizabethan' plays belong to a single generation and most of them were written after the death of the Queen. When Sidney wrote his *Defence of Poesy* he could find only one contemporary play worth mentioning, the formidable *Gorboduc*. Forty years later all the great plays had been written. If we could understand why a man born in 1570 could during his adult life have been present at the first nights of all the English tragedies that matter, there might be more chance of a renaissance of drama in the second Elizabethan age. The nature of the audience (heterogeneous, but united in the things that mattered), the nature of the stage (intimate, simple, unrealistic), the nature of the language (fluid and expanding)—all these things contributed; but perhaps the dominant factor was the accident of genius. If Shakespeare had been born in 1554 he might never have written for the stage.

The books under review are concerned with the alpha and the omega of the great period. The Charlton-Waller edition of Marlowe's *Edward II* has been brought up to date by Mr F. N. Lees, by addition rather than by amendment. Many books and articles about Marlowe have been published since 1933, and it says much for the solidity of judgement displayed by the original editors that again and again Mr Lees is driven to admit that the consensus of recent opinion supports Professor Charlton's views—for example, that *Henry VI* (Parts 2 and 3) preceded *Edward II*, and that Marlowe, having learnt from Shakespeare how to dramatise the chronicles, himself provided the model for *Richard II* and *Richard III*.

The most interesting addendum concerns the murderer Lightborn. Briggs showed that the name belonged to one of the devils of the Chester cycle of miracle plays. Mr Lees comments on the more than historical appropriateness of the red-hot spit with which Lightborn proposes to murder the king, and he mentions the suggestive fact that the play dealing with the fall of Lucifer in all the main extant cycles was performed by the Tanners, the guild to which the Marlowe family belonged.

Edward II has been called Marlowe's 'finest technical achieve-



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ment'. It is, indeed, his only well-constructed play, and it contains some superb scenes, especially in the last act, and some poetry so good that Ingram wanted to give the best touches to Shakespeare, though, of course, Mortimer's lines are characteristically Marlovian:

Farewell, fair queen; weep not for Mortimer,
That scorns the world, and, as a traveller,
Goes to discover countries yet unknown.

But, when all is said, *Tamburlaine* and *The Jew of Malta* are both richer in poetry; and the general reader is right to prefer *Faustus* which even in its mangled text far outshines in the last few scenes all the plays Shakespeare had written by the time Marlowe was stabbed to the brain in the private room in Mistress Bull's tavern.

To turn from Marlowe to Beaumont and Fletcher is to turn from promise to decadence. The plays which go under their names— for Massinger and Shirley collaborated with Fletcher, and Fletcher often wrote on his own—exhibit all the tricks of the trade. They are clever, sophisticated, exciting and amusing, even at times, poetical. For two generations they were more popular than Shakespeare's, and even after that they were frequently put above all their other contemporaries. Yet most serious critics would now put them below Marlowe, Jonson, Webster and Middleton, below even Chapman and Ford. Mr William W. Appleton in his too brief critical study urges us to reconsider our current neglect of them, and he suggests that they 'might come to life upon the stage' where they properly belong. It would certainly be worth while to revive *Philaster*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *The Wild Goose Chase*, and a few other comedies. They might be surprisingly successful on the stage. After reading a dozen of them recently I was tempted to think that the modern verdict on their work was too harsh. But some of Mr Appleton's arguments on their behalf are not very convincing:

Their fondness for sensation and shock, their emphasis on sex, their energy, brilliance and wit, even their coarseness, all recommend them to the modern temper. Their dexterity in form and language also recommends itself to a generation nurtured on the New Criticism.

The first sentence provides a somewhat dubious testimonial, and the second is misleading. The 'New Criticism' has shown no eagerness to recommend Beaumont and Fletcher, and their characteristic dexterity is not the kind, one would have thought, to stand up to a regular examination by Professor Empson or Cleanth Brooks.

Yet Mr Appleton could retort that the experts are still quarrelling about *Henry VIII*, and that Wolsey's farewell has been ascribed both to Fletcher and Shakespeare. A poet who can be mistaken for the

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Master is not negligible. It must be admitted that Fletcher wrote many passages of verse, and even whole scenes, which, divorced from their context, seem almost first-rate. But, as Somerset Maugham falsely accused Shakespeare, Fletcher 'sacrificed everything to effective situation'; and when a dramatist does that, even his situations prove ineffective after the first hearing. The momentary thrill, the sudden twist to the plot, even the startling epithet may delight an audience and entertain a modern reader, but if character and truth are both sacrificed the work cannot wear well.

'Fairy-tales for Jacobean gentry' is Professor L. B. Wallis's description of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays; and the phrase hits off their irresponsibility, their lack of ultimate integrity, their refusal to reflect reality—and their misfortune. They really were unlucky in having to write for a narrower audience than Shakespeare had done. Perhaps Racine is the only dramatist who succeeded in writing great plays for an audience of gentlemen. In the last years of his career Shakespeare was confronted with the same audience as Fletcher was; and he gave them apparently the same fairy-tale hokum that Fletcher did. But Shakespeare used the wicked stepmothers, the lost princesses, the magic potions, the disguised princes, the living statue, and the enchanted island for his own artistic purposes—to present parables about the nature of reality and about the necessity of forgiveness. Perhaps, if the courtiers of Charles I had not preferred Fletcherian fairy-tales to the truth, the 'two-handed engine at the door' might never have become necessary.

The Victorians complained of Beaumont and Fletcher's indecency, though their bawdy scenes, being generally true to life, are unobjectionable. Their immorality for us lies in the way they shirk their artistic responsibilities. They write about incest, only to reveal that the couple are not related; they write in praise of chastity, though their virgins (as Coleridge complained) have the minds of strumpets; they write plays based on the *Controversiae* of the elder Seneca in which the situations are deliberately improbable.

Mr Appleton has made intelligent use of the best of his predecessors—Danby, Maxwell, Wallis and Waith—and he provides a sensible introduction to the fifty plays and to the posthumous reputation of the dramatists. His book is apparently aimed at the general reader, but both the general reader and the student would have welcomed a fuller treatment of fewer plays. Two points may be questioned. Hunt's selections were imitated not from *Tales from Shakespeare* but from Lamb's *Specimens*, and it is severe to speak of Clarissa Harlowe's struggles with Lovelace as 'machinations'.

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Notes About Our Authors

DANNIE ABSE was born in South Wales in 1923. He has published two books of poems, *After Every Green Thing* and *Walking Under Water*, a poetry drama *Fire in Heaven*, and two novels, *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve* and *Some Corner of an English Field*, both published by Hutchinson.

THOMAS BLACKBURN was born in Cumberland and educated at Bromsgrove School and Durham University, and has taught English at Marylebone Grammar School. He has published several books of poems, of which the latest is *In the Fire* (Putnam) which appeared early this year. He is the holder of the Gregory Poetry Fellowship at Leeds University, and is one of the editors of the PEN Anthology of *New Poems* for 1957.

D. J. ENRIGHT was born in 1920 at Leamington Spa and educated at Downing College, Cambridge. He has just returned from Japan, where he was a lecturer in English at Konan University. He has published two books of poems, *The Laughing Hyena* (Routledge) and *Bread Rather Than Blossoms* (Secker and Warburg).

JOHN HOLLOWAY was until recently a lecturer in English at Aberdeen University, but has now taken up an appointment at Cambridge. He has contributed to *Essays in Criticism*, *The Cambridge Journal* and other periodicals, and his poems have been broadcast and have appeared in a number of anthologies. A critical book, *The Victorian Sage*, appeared in 1953, and a first collection of his poems is shortly to be published by The Marvell Press.

JENNY JOSEPH was born in 1923. She went to Oxford to read English in 1949. Her poems have appeared in many leading periodicals and in the PEN anthology for 1956. She now works on *The Oxford Mail*.

PAT KAVANAGH published his first poems in *The London Magazine* Vol. 2 No. 9. He left Oxford in 1955 and has since worked for The British Council in Barcelona, the BBC (Television) and now with a firm of book designers.

QUENTIN STEVENSON has just completed his last year at Oxford. A review by him appeared in *The London Magazine* Vol. 3 No. 1.

CAROL STEWART was born in India, has worked on a farm, in the Civil Service and at various other jobs and now lives in London.

ANTHONY THWAITE was born in Yorkshire. He came down from Oxford in 1955, married and went out to Japan as a Professor of English at Tokyo. A first book of his poems is to be published in 1957 by The Marvell Press.

THE NEXT NUMBER

The London Magazine

Vol. 3, Number 12, will be out in mid-November and will contain special contributions on:

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